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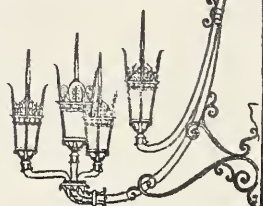
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# THE 1900 INVESTIGATION OF THE BOSTON PARKS DEPARTMENT

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EXCERPTS FROM THE TRANSCRIPT  
Including an Introductory Essay  
on the Causes and Meaning  
of the Investigation

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## FRANKLIN PARK COALITION BULLETIN



A Publication of The Franklin Park Coalition, Inc.  
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March, 1984

## THE CAUSES AND MEANING OF THE INVESTIGATION

The Boston Parks Department has been investigated only once in its 109 year history. That was in 1900 when the Board of Aldermen requested an investigation of the Department's management practices.

The period under review was relatively brief, between 1896 and January 1, 1900. Mayor Thomas N. Hart approved the Aldermen's request on February 27, 1900 and testimony was heard beginning on March 16th. It was all over in 2 months and filled a 1,631 page report.

Joseph Lundy was counsel for the Board of Aldermen. The Park Commissioners retained former Mayor Nathan R. Matthews\* to represent the Parks Department.

During twenty long sessions between March 16 and May 18, 1900, the investigation covered:

- Parks Department hiring practices;
- Extravagance in the use of loan;
- Salaries;
- "Sweetheart" contracts;
- Changes in park design;
- Landscaping practices; and
- Assessments of land taking for parks.

The most controversial items were changes on Park Design under Park Superintendent John Pettigrew and landscaping practices.

The impetus for the hearing grew out of public protest on landscape practices of Pettigrew at Pinebank in January, 1898. Alderman E. Peabody Gerry of West Roxbury (in whose District Pinebank was) attended the meeting and led the critics during the 1900 investigation. Gerry was the lone dissenter in the Majority Report which acquitted the Parks Department of any corruption or mismanagement.

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\* A political intimate of Hugh O'Brien, Boston's first Irish mayor, Matthews became mayor in 1890. He beat Thomas N. Hart who returned to City Hall a decade later. Matthews was a young dynamic mayor with solid "lace curtain" Irish backing. Although a progressive in management techniques he nevertheless was a fiscal conservative. He was, in and out of office, an advocate for a strong executive in cities. During Mayor Matthews' four years in office, he saw to it that the Park system was completed, particularly Jamaica Park, Wood Island Park in East Boston, the Muddy River Improvement and Leverett Park. He was also the first mayor to become involved in the playground movement; both Franklin Field and Columbus Avenue (Carter) Playground were begun during his terms.

The full effects of the national depression hit Boston in the winter of 1893-94. Although Matthews put as many men as he felt the City could afford to work on public jobs like park building; the massive unemployment caused Matthews' popularity to plummet. His strong Irish base disintegrated and he did not seek reelection. He stepped down in January, 1895.

Most of the people critical of the Department lived in Gerry's District, mainly around Franklin Park (Nathan Dole, Michael Bolles, Sewell Balkam and Henry D. Williams).

Alderman Gerry and his constituents were quite rightly outraged that park features, designed by Olmsted and built at some expense, were then torn down by Pettigrew without any apparent reason: the Forest Hills Entrance Gates, the pools stone bridges at Willow Pond, the Valley Gates and portions of the Glen Road Walls.

Superintendent Pettigrew justified the removal of the Valley Gates because of many complaints from people of the danger of crossing Glen Road. It was impossible to see in either direction because of the gatehouses; moreover, Pettigrew testified, the gates had "never been shut since the Park was built."\*

There was considerable discussion over the artificial pools which were made in Leverett Park in 1895 and 1896. Critics of the Parks Department were angry that the rustic stone bridges were taken down and thrown into the pools as fill in 1899. Pettigrew explained that the pools were built by an agreement with the Natural History Society for a fresh water aquarium. When the Society was unable to carry out their elaborate schemes, he directed that the pools be filled up. Pettigrew considered the unused pools a public nuisance.

Charles Sprague Sargent, Director of the Arnold Arboretum and Brooklin Park Commissioner, was singled out as the man responsible for major changes in the landscaping of Franklin Park in particular. It was established during the hearing that Sargent regularly consulted with the Boston Park Commissioners and in 1896 had recommended John Pettigrew to Mayor Josiah Quincy and Park Commissioner Laban Pratt to be the first superintendent of Parks in Boston.

The chief reason for community protest was the cutting down of trees in Franklin Park. As James Bowditch wrote in the Boston Transcript of May 7, 1898,

"the cutting down of many large trees in Franklin Park has lately aroused among interested men and women a decided feeling of unrest."

Sargent frequently marked trees to be cut down, which were then removed by Parks Department laborers. After 1897 Pettigrew directed great changes in the general scheme of planting in Franklin Park. In his first report as Superintendent, Pettigrew also described his intention to,

"in future park plantations to use largely the trees and shrubs native to Massachusetts."

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\* The Iron Gates which originally cost \$916 were sold to a South Boston junk dealer for \$46.23. The gates were 10 years old.



Yet a great deal of Franklin Park had already been planted under direction of Olmsted and his colleague, Landscape Gardener, William Fischer. A great deal of this work was pulled up in 1898. In the 24th Annual Report of the Park Commissioners for the year 1898 Pettigrew stated,

"In carrying out the design to preserve and accentuate the New England woodland character of Franklin Park, it became necessary to remove quantities of exotic tress and shrubbery, which did not blend harmoniously with the native plants."

Olmsted and Fischer enjoyed lush plantings around boulders and the original planting of Franklin Park had a lot of rock garden effects. In 1898, Pettigrew pulled out most of these rocks to build the retaining wall behind the stable of the new administration yard then under construction.

Pettigrew even wanted to remove the Hagbourne Hill steps. In a letter to the Park Commissioners dated October 18, 1897, Pettigrew recommended this action as "obviously appropriate...their removal would not be an inconvenience."

Sargent was clearly behind these changes as he was strongly opposed to the gardesque style of landscaping (towards which Fischer leaned in his work) and did not like "foreign" or "exotic" plants that would not survive without considerable care and maintenance. Sargent's view prevailed as the monotonous plantings of Franklin Park today attests: oaks, oaks and more oaks.

Sargent also changed Olmsted's original design for Franklin Park's Greeting. In the 1885 plan for Franklin Park, Olmsted described the Greeting as:

"Parallel and contiguous drives, rides and walks under rows of trees, forming a promenade or a meeting ground half a mile in length."

The Greeting had not yet been built when Pettigrew took over as Superintendent. He immediately changed it, as he described in his report for 1897:

"Another form of improvement planned for execution this season is the formation of a long grassy glade, extending from Blue Hill Avenue to the Playstead...surrounded on both sides by a meandering path."

The Glade was completed in the summer of 1899. In his testimony before the Aldermen, Pettigrew justified this drastic change in terms of economy. Describing Olmsted's plan as similar to Rotten Row in London's Hyde Park, Pettigrew estimated the cost to be \$175,000 to \$200,000.

"It seemed unlikely that public opinion would justify so great an outlay for any feature not strictly necessary..."

The cost of the Greeting was reduced to \$15,000 and the space made "into a beautiful open meadow called the Glade."\*

Sargent came under intense criticism when he testified on May 1, 1900, especially by Alderman Gerry. When Sargent took the stand, Gerry shouted out, "isn't he the man that is doing all the destruction?" Sargent became very testy and when asked how the Arboretum is managed he stated that the Arboretum was under the direction and control of Harvard College and that the City of Boston had nothing to do with it. As the Boston Transcript reported the next day, Alderman Gerry was not satisfied with that answer and pressed Sargent further. Sargent refused to answer saying "it's none of your business." At this point Gerry stormed out of the hearing. Nathan Matthews interceded, calmed Professor Sargent down and coaxed Gerry back into the Aldermen's chambers and the hearing resumed.\*\*

Samuel Parsons also testified on the first of May. Parsons was probably the most eminent witness to speak at the invitation of the Park Department. For fifteen years he was superintendent of Parks in Manhattan and the Bronx following Frederick Law Olmsted who was relieved in 1883 when the post was abolished. When the political climate improved, the Superintendency was revived and Parsons appointed probably at the recommendation or encouragement of Calvert Vaux. Vaux was Olmsted's partner from 1858 to 1873 and together they designed Central Park among several other great parks across the country. Vaux and Parsons were partners in 1880 and 1882 and as Superintendent, Parsons worked with Vaux on designing the revised plan for Morningside Park in 1889. Parsons was a determined opponent of commercial invasion of public parks, a battle fought by Olmsted also while in New York City. After 1900, Parsons served in beautifying the capital at Washington in collaboration with Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.

Parsons was asked to give his professional opinion on Franklin Park by Nathan Matthews in order to counter the critics of the Park's design and management.

"It seems to me", Parsons testified, "that Franklin Park is a very remarkable park for its great extent of fine meadow surface, which is a great object. In New York, we spent an enormous sum of money in Central Park simply to secure meadows half the size of these meadows and it seems to me Franklin Park is extremely valuable for its large and open meadow effect...The plantations on the outskirts are kept well adapted to the contour of the ground and the whole thing is kept very attractive...Ellicottdale is one of the most charming park spots I ever saw in my life. I don't think there is anything equal to it in New York or Brooklyn."

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\* Arthur Shurcliff resurrected Olmsted's original plan of the Greeting in Shurcliff's 1910 design of the Franklin Park Zoo. Two long and wide parallel promenades were built in 1919 and 1921.

\*\* Boston Evening Transcript, May 1, 1900, Pg. 4, Col. 3.

Park Commissioner Charles Stratton and the former Landscape Gardener for the Department William L. Fischer were both interviewed during the Hearing. Fischer was closely questioned on his practices of removing trees in the Wilderness and the change of plantings at the Valley Gates.

Stratton was asked how John Pettigrew was appointed. Professor Sargent's influence on Mayor Josiah Quincy and Park Commissioner Laban Pratt in 1896 when Pettigrew was hired was brought out. Opposition critics pointed out how Pettigrew had been dismissed from his job as Chicago Park Superintendent for Lincoln Park.

Things got a little silly when opposition counsel Joseph Lundy questioned Commissioner Stratton on bills submitted by the Olmsted firm for blueprints and streetcar fares in addition to their normal fees. Lundy criticized the Commissioner for not inquiring into these extra changes:

"87¢ here is quite important...the Park Commissioners have been somewhat careless."

The Park Commissioner of Boston, the Director of the Arnold Arboretum, the Superintendent of Boston Parks, the Superintendent of New York Parks, the Landscape Gardener who planted much of the Boston Park System for fifteen years and other citizens all testified, some at great length.

The one person who was never called was the one person who had the most to say about the issues of design and management.

John Charles Olmsted.

John Olmsted superintended the construction of the Boston Park System for over a decade and designed many of the features of the Park - such as Agassiz Bridge in the Fens and Ellicott Arch in Franklin Park. John had the day-to-day responsibility of carrying out his stepfather's master plan as well as managing the Olmsted office as its senior partner. John had the most intimate knowledge of the planning, construction and management needs of the Boston Park System which he more than anyone else saw translated into earth, trees and stone from his stepfather's vision.

But John remained silent in his Brookline office.

Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. was alive but mentally incapacitated; hospitalized at McLean's Hospital since 1898. Charles Eliot, who became a senior partner in 1895, and had an active role in the plantings of the Park System after that, had died young in 1897. John was the only link to Frederick Law Olmsted's plans and intentions, which were often invoked by friends and opponents of the Park Commissioners.\*

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\* Some not too considerably. In criticizing the design of the Forest Hills Entrance Bridge, Nathan H. Dole called the Bridge "most inartistic." "I supposed that (at the time the bridge was designed) (Olmsted) was beginning to show the signs of mental weakness." Alderman Gerry said that Charles Sprague Sargent's views of the Park System were "diametrically opposed to Professor Olmsted's plans."

Throughout the entire hearing Frederick Law Olmsted's name and theories of design were quoted and used to justify both sides of the issues like some Old Testament Prophet. As if quoting the Bible, Matthews referred to F.L. Olmsted's 1889 pamphlet "Observations on the Treatment of Public Plantations more especially relating to the use of the Axe" as an argument against those who criticized tree removal in the Wilderness. This pamphlet was written in response to similar public outcries of tree work in Central Park and it explained carefully why careful and thoughtful thinning and pruning accelerated the growth and prevented disease.

Yet the Prophet's closest confident remained carefully out of the fray. Undoubtedly, John was asked to testify. Nathan Matthews first telegram was certainly to 99 Warren Street in Brookline asking John to be a witness at the hearing. John declined.

John's name was never mentioned in the testimony nor in the press coverage.

The closest that anyone can come to John's reactions to the changes in the landscaping of Olmsted's original plans for the Park System are his "notes on a tour of the Park System" that he had with John Pettigrew on April 6, 1900. (Pettigrew took the witness stand on April 25th.)

John Olmsted's report for his files deserves to be quoted at length.

"As previously arranged, Mr. Pettigrew called for me at about 2:45 PM and I drove with him until 6 PM...

I was surprised to see for the first time\* that a number of very extensive changes had been made in work which had previously been completed even to the extent of planting. (In the Fens) the plantations have all been removed and the planting ground cut down to such small proportions that it now looks entirely out of proportion and can hardly be made to look right...(Pettigrew) struck me as being entirely out of sympathy with the character of the design which we were attempting to carry out in the Fens and in a good many other places...

About Leverett Pond, in the region of the proposed Natural History Garden, very extensive changes had been made. All of the pools from Wards Pond down have been filled up. Nearly all the plantations have been cleared away, nearly all the walks have been dug up and loamed over. All the boulder work at the Ward's Pond outlet and at various other places has been removed and Mr. Pettigrew expressed a great

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\* The Olmsted firm ceased being advisory to the Parks Department in 1896. John Pettigrew assumed the new post of Superintendent on January 4, 1897.



contempt for this sort of masonry work\* and pointed with pride to the use he had made of the boulders in the retaining wall behind the Administration Building in Franklin Park...

Mr. Pettigrew called my attention to the very slight change in the appearance of the Wilderness which had been caused by the thinning out of trees which had been objected to by various witnesses at the Aldermanic hearing. I acknowledged that the general appearance of the Wilderness had not been altered for the worse and in fact, that the alteration was scarcely perceptible...

The ground east of the circle which was formerly intended to be the west end of the Greeting, has now been smoothly covered over with loam and is ready to seed to grass...All evidence of intention to construct the Greeting has been obliterated. The large area of ground stripped and graded for the purpose and the large pile of stone accumulated for the macadam have all been removed. The change is no doubt a decided improvement in appearance.

...By means of this excavation, space was obtained for the group of four or five Administration Buildings with yards, etc. A huge, rough stone wall has been built west, north and east of the buildings to hold up the bank. Mr. Pettigrew said he had obtained the stone by gathering up nearly all the boulders which Fischer had used so freely in connection with banks and picturesque plantations in Franklin Park, especially in the vicinity of Scarborough Pond. Mr. Pettigrew said he did not think such boulders at all a good idea, and had done all he could to get rid of them..."\*\*

The Board of Aldermen were responding to citizen complaints about the Park System and the management by the Parks Department when they requested a public hearing.

Public discussion led to the creation of the Park Department and in pushing for the building of Parks,\*\* so it was quite right for the

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\* Which John Olmsted had designed.

\*\* Olmsted Associates Papers, Library of Congress, Box B68, Job 900. Original is in typescript. Dr. Cynthia Zaitzevsky suggests that it was for office use.

\*\*\* The first public forum on Parks for Boston was held in November, 1869, two days of public hearings. After five years of political action and public discussion, the Park Commission was formed on April 5, 1875. In June, 1876 a large public hearing was held at Faneuil Hall which endorsed the Park Commission's plans for parks and urged early action to get them built.



public to comment on the work done on their behalf by managers working for the best interests of the public.

Unfortunately, as is sometimes the case with citizen complaints, testimony by most of the private citizens was mean spirited and narrow minded.

All of the residents called to testify were part of the Pinebank meeting of 1898; almost all were property owners abutting Franklin Park.

While most of them decried what they felt was the removal of too many good trees and wasteful expenditures in removing work previously built; the motives were more personal than public-minded.

Nathan Haskell Dole was the foremost critic of the Department's tree work. He lived at No. 91 Glen Road, the last house before Franklin Park. He considered that Franklin Park had been in a state of nature before landscaping and the woods opposite his house were once "natural woods." As a result of the thinning of the Wilderness, that section of the Park behind his house, the bird life had disappeared and the hillside was "as bald as my head."

John Enneking, a Boston painter and Park Commissioner of Hyde Park (then a separate town, today a district of the City of Boston) called Franklin Park an "Eden of beauty" to artists before the Park was landscaped. Enneking complained that artists no longer flock to the Park because this "state of nature had been" destroyed.

Michael Bolles, a banker and another abutter was especially upset with the new stone wall that had recently been completed along Sigourney Street, directly opposite his house, at the corner of Robeson Street. Bolles was a fierce defender of his property and several of his letters to Park Commissioner Stratton complaining of the condition of the boundary wall and border plantations opposite his house were entered as hearing exhibits.

The recently completed boundary wall around Franklin Park caused what seems today as an inordinate volume of furor.

Nathan Dole was the most outspoken. In one of the most memorable lines in the entire printed testimony, Dole described the wall of Glen Road, "like a scar across the bosom of Venus of Milo."

"It is not an American idea", Dole went on, "an effete European idea - to keep people out of their own property...to put an entire stone wall around the whole Park I considered wasteful...wicked."

Another abutter, Henry D. Williams who lived opposite the Forest Hills Entrance on Morton Street\* criticized the removal of the Forest Hills Entrance Gate less than five years after it was built as a waste of money. He was even angrier that the stones from the gate had been used to build the boundary wall along Forest Hills Street.

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\* His house and lot today is replaced by a restaurant.

"I don't like it. It is a rebuff to the public, says 'Keep out of these grounds.' (Central Park) is surrounded by a great deal of massive architecture, which the boundary wall harmonizes very well. That is not the case here - this is in the country, truly rural."

In his Minority Report, Alderman Gerry picked up on Williams' point about the Franklin Park area being suburban.

"It is to be hoped that the dream of the Commissioners and their counsel that 'the sense of seclusion from city sights' may be realized. In fifty years we may see such a thing happen, but in the meantime a Chinese wall to pay interest on was most unnecessary. It has never been shown why \$57,100 of borrowed money should have been expended on a solid stone wall around Franklin Park..."

After many hours of testimony and long closing arguments by counsels for the Park Commissioners and the Board of Aldermen, the Committee judged that the charges against the Park Commissioners were not sustained by the evidence. The Committee did make some recommendations, among them were:

1. That the Parks Department move out of Pinebank to a more convenient central location in the business district.
2. The Department is deficient in not having someone at headquarters familiar with all aspects of work going on or projected in the parks.
3. Favortism is shown in certain sections of the city in employment and recommended that civil service commission treat all citizens alike.

In his lone dissenting minority report, Alderman Gerry made one recommendation that is as valid today as in 1900: that the Parks Department have a landscape architect advisory board. Not since 1896, when the Olmsted firm last served has the Boston Parks Department had a landscape architect advisory.

Nathan Matthews in his long closing remarks brought out two important issues -

- that the Park System was underused and needed a program to popularize the Parks and increase use;
- Park maintenance appropriations were too low. Adequate maintenance of the Park System required at least \$500,000 annually.

Both the Transcript and the Boston Globe repeated these two points in their last stories on the Aldermanic Hearings. Otherwise, wrote The Globe, "nothing of value" came from the Hearings.\*

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\* The Globe wondered too where the \$5,000 would come from to pay the costs of the Hearing; \$2,000 of which would go to print the transcript.

The investigation of the Parks Department took place at exactly the time when the Parks Department's role was changing from park builder to park manager. It also came at exactly the time when Franklin Park was completed along with the rest of the Park System and there opened up conflicting ideas of what and for whom parks should be.

As the Boston Transcript editorialized in its April 26, 1900 issue\*, part of the motivation for the hearing was "a part of the general onslaught of unpaid commissioners which perhaps have not been as tractable and obsequitious toward the demands of practical politicians as some that depend upon city services for their bread and butter."

Up to that time, park commissioners were unpaid, although were selected for political loyalty. Alderman Gerry's attitude towards Commissioner Stratton, a Back Bay attorney, and Charles Sprague Sargent clearly reflected that practical politician's outlook. Gerry was especially critical that Sargent (who not only was not accountable to Boston voters like Gerry was but was an out-of-towner to boot) had much to do with the appointment of John Pettigrew. Gerry was furious that outsiders like Sargent and Pettigrew were making wasteful, wholesale changes on already built (and paid for) landscaping work.\*\*

Ironically the Olmsted firm, particularly John who had so much to do with the construction of Franklin Park and the rest of the Park System, welcomed the transition from Landscape Architect Advisory to Park Superintendent within the Parks Department. The Olmsted firm realized that the time for proper management of the Parks had arrived as the Parks were being completed after nearly 20 years effort and expenditure.

What the Olmsted firm did not expect, and what caused so much confusion among Boston residents was the drastic tearing down and digging up of architectural features, trees and shrubs that Pettigrew ordered immediately. Charles Sprague Sargent emerged from the hearing as the shadowy figure behind the scenes which made the situation even more conspiratorial.

No one was quite certain how these huge Parks were to be managed and yet people by the thousands were using them and demanding certain services and proper maintenance. The Hearing brought out this confusion, particularly in the awarding of concession privileges. Nathan Matthews touched on the greatest need which was (and remains

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\* Boston Evening Transcript, April 26, 1900, Pg. 8, Col. 4. The Transcript went on to suggest that the overvaluation of land prices for parks and playgrounds merited investigation more than the Parks Commission.

\*\* The Park Commissioners did not learn anything from this aspect of the Investigation. At a special meeting of the Commissioners on July 31, 1900, the Board voted that "no trees be cut in the parks without the approval of Professor Charles S. Sargent." Minutes of the Board of Park Commissioners, July 31, 1900.

today) an adequate maintenance budget. In 1900, the Parks Department was not certain what that was yet.

Most significantly, the hearing brought out for the first time in a quarter century (since the Parks Commissioners were formed in 1876) how the public perceived their parks.

It was vastly different from 1876 or 1869 when people imagined how their parks would be like; in 1900 the Parks were there before everyone's eyes.

A great deal of selfishness motivated the seven men critical of the way the Parks - notably Franklin Park - had been developed. Most were abutters and in the cases of Dole and Bolles considered Franklin Park their backyard; Franklin Park increased the value and beauty of their private property.\*

Bolles was particularly revealing in an April 17, 1900 letter to Park Commissioner Stratton. Stratton had written on April 9th that the border walls and plantations were made for the many who use the park rather than for the few who live on it's borders. Bolles wrote back haughtily,

"In matters of this sort the views of the masses are, as a rule, of very little value."

Nathan Matthews in his closing remarks noted that of the total population of Boston only 13 people were opposed to the Parks Commissioners' policies.

"It is nothing new", Matthews said, "you find it wherever parks abound. These critics wants the parks appropriated to the private uses of abutters..."

The artist John Enneking brought out the question of for whom were the parks designed. Recalling the days before construction of the Park began, Enneking said how much he enjoyed the rustic Wilderness scenery to paint in and sketch. The remade landscape, built for the enjoyment of thousands for multiple uses, disturbed Enneking's private, particular perception of the purpose of Franklin Park. Artists no longer flock there, he moaned, because the Edenesque beauty had been destroyed. Matthews questioned this in his closing remarks; sketching parties did enjoy the Park scenery.

It was the genius of Frederick Law Olmsted to see in 1883, when the land of Franklin Park was purchased, what was to become of Boston in fifty years when the Park would be matured. In 1883 the Franklin Park area was rural and thinly settled. Yet in seven years electrified streetcars connected Dudley Station to Grove Hall; in eighteen years an elevated railroad connected the business district

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\* Bolles' house was built about 1886; Dole's in 1888 both after construction of Franklin Park had begun. The original owners of the land under both houses had sold large chunks of their property to the city for Franklin Park intending to capitalize on the park by selling off house lots.



with Dudley Station and by 1909, twenty-six years later Forest Hills was connected by elevation directly to the financial, retail and political center of Boston. The population soared around Franklin Park in those twenty-six years. By 1926, the city around Franklin Park was unrecognizable from the city of 1900. It took great knowledge of urban growth patterns and bold foresight to plan and construct a park that was elastic enough to serve several generations. The boundary wall was essential to confine the rural qualities of Franklin Park that Olmsted had so carefully designed and that his stepson supervised into completion. The critics of the Park Department were very shortsighted. They were justifiably angry at Pettigrew for wantonly destroying the Country Park Gates, but for the wrong reasons. Within ten years of the hearing, motor vehicles were making an impact on city life which only increased year by year. The gates could have solved many management problems for future generations had Pettigrew and the Park Commissioners had foresight in 1899.

The same misunderstanding of what Franklin Park is for and the kind of people it serves exists today. The debate about the boundary walls is similar to the questions about the blocks of granite which close all but two entrances to Franklin Park to motor vehicles. These stones were placed beginning in 1971 in response to a serious management problem of motor vehicle abuse in the Park. At first, to some residents, these blocks meant the same thing as the Forest Hills wall did to Henry Williams: "the public keep out."

Closing off the park to motor vehicles except three small parking lots and the main east-west park road has caused some debate on park use. As one resident put it in the May 5, 1983 Bay State Banner.

"A lot of people who use the Park won't be able to in the future. People who live in the neighboring apartment houses have no place else to go to wash their cars themselves. This is also the only place away from traffic you can come to teach someone to drive."

One man's thing of beauty is another man's bald hill as both Nathan Dole and John Enneking illustrated in their testimony. In 1981 a new concrete walk was laid that connected nearly a mile of Franklin Park, from one side to the other. Now people could walk or bicycle through the Park in greater ease. This walk was soundly criticized by the track coach who supervised Fall track meets in Franklin Park. He called the walk ugly in a 1983 letter to the Franklin Park Coalition and said it should have been cinders or wood chips to better serve the runners.

The Wilderness was not planted and landscaped to benefit Nathan Dole's house and property; the new walk was not meant to serve season track meets from colleges across the state either.

Proper management by dedicated and motivated Park professionals can balance these conflicting perceptions and needs of a great park to benefit the majority and preserve the public park for the future generations of the city.

The Investigation of the Park Department of 1900 was a public debate that sought to find that solution at a critical junction in the history of the Boston Park System.



## Acknowledgements

I am first and foremost indebted to Dr. Cynthia Zaitzevsky who first brought The Investigation of the Park Department to my attention in the fall of 1980. Dr. Zaitzevsky was then finishing up the final draft of her book, Frederick Law Olmsted and The Boston Park System. Dr. Zaitzevsky also gave me a copy of John Olmsted's notes of his tour of the Park System with John Pettigrew on April 6, 1900. Dr. Zaitzevsky found this report in the Olmsted archives at the Library of Congress. I was privileged to read the draft chapters on Franklin Park and on the plantings and architecture of the Park System.

Anyone with an interest in the Boston Park System will forever owe a debt to Cynthia Zaitzevsky for her seminal and definitive research on the topic, which consumed over a decade. Frederick Law Olmsted and the Boston Park System (Harvard University Press, 1982) is a major source book. Chapter XIII "Plant Materials and Design" is particularly relevant to this excerpt of The Investigation.

Mr. Bill Alex, President of the Frederick Law Olmsted Association, New York City, provided me with biographical data on Samuel Parsons. Bill has always been an enthusiastic supporter of the Coalition's work.

Tess Cederholm, Curator of the Fine Arts Department, Boston Public Library is another friend who is always encouraging the work of the Franklin Park Coalition and my efforts personally. Two members of her staff, Pamela Barrows and Joanne Wood dug out the newspaper sources in the BPL microfilm department, which saved me a lot of time.

Laurel Sutton typed this issue of The Bulletin from xerox copies of the original document.

For anyone interested in reading more of the transcript of The Investigation, it is in the Government Documents Room, Research Wing (old building), Boston Public Library. The full title is City Document 115-1900 (6350A.41).

Richard Heath, Editor

FROM JAMAICA PLAIN NEWS, JAN. 27, 1898

SPARE THE TREES.

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Public Protest to Devastating the Parks.

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Animated Hearing at Pine Bank.

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W.H. Winslow, N.H. Dole, Dr. E.P. Gerry, G.C. Mann, Wm. Brewster of Cambridge, J.J. Enneking of Boston, Frank T. Merrill of Dorchester and others voice the feeling of the People - Large attendance of well known men and women - The Commissioners defend their course and read a letter from Professor Sargent - H.E. Hunnewell supports them.

The interest of the public in the welfare of the park system was very manifest at the office of the Park Commission, at Pine Bank Building\*, on Monday afternoon, when a considerable number of people appeared in remonstrance to the deforesting of the parks. Mr. W.H. Winslow of Perkins street was the spokesman for the remonstrants, and he presented a petition of protest against the course of the Commission in its treatment of the forestry of the park system. The petition was as follows:

To the Board of Park Commissioners of the City of Boston:

As you know, considerable dissatisfaction exists with some of the work authorized by former Park Commissioners in respect to the unnecessary removal of trees and shrubbery and the substitution of costly artificial for natural features. Understanding that in such matters you now rely upon your superintendent, Mr. Pettigrew, who himself does not wish to be wholly responsible, we, the undersigned would therefore

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\*In Jamaica Park. Building still stands as a park building.

ask if you will co-operate with certain gentlemen selected from a list of names we propose to offer you, allowing them to share in the responsibility of removing natural features, including trees and shrubbery, in the future, especially in Franklin Park and near Jamaica Pond. The names we refer to will be those of representative citizens some of whom live near, and all of whom are interested in our parks, and who we are sure you would admit to be entitled to influence and a definite voice in the matter in question. Asking a favorable reply at your earliest convenience, we are very respectfully yours.

[signed by 23 people]

Before presenting the petition, Mr. Winslow made a brief statement of the position of the remonstrants. They wanted the maximum of nature and the minimum of artificiality, showing the natural wildness just as much as possible. That the commissioners honestly desired the best results was not doubted, but their ideas appeared to be quite different from those of the people. It might be said that the public were too ignorant of this subject to appreciate a perfect park. If that be so, the perfect park could wait until the people were educated up to it. The people objected to the substitution of artificial features, at great cost, for the natural. As instances of the objectionable methods pursued, Ward's and Jamaica Ponds were cited, these having suffered the loss of much shrubbery and made to look barren and unnatural. The people promoting this remonstrance, the speaker said, did not seek to control those in authority, but to suggest and assist them. As a practical solution they offered the memorial printed above.

Mr. Winslow then read letters of protest from Prof. W.O. Crosby, Dr. R.T. Edes and Miss E.C. Cleveland of Nutwood, Perkins street, and called on several gentlemen to speak, namely: Prof. Brewster, a recognized authority on ornithology; Mr. George A. Enneking of Boston and Mr. Frank T. Merrill of Dorchester, both prominent artists; Mr. George C. Mann, Dr. E. P. Gerry, Mr. Wm. Rotch, a nephew of Prof. Arnold, for whom the Arnold Arboretum was named. Others who spoke were Mr. T.J. Stearns of Park lane, Dr. Barnes of Beacon street, Mrs. Noble and another representative of Roxbury Woman's Club, and Mr. N.H. Dole. Their expressions were unanimous in disapproval of the cutting away of many trees and much shrubbery in various parts of Franklin and Jamaica Parks and other parts of the system. They felt deeply aggrieved at the loss of nature's ornaments, and of the wild and natural effects.

Prof. Brewster emphasized the fact that the clearing of shrubbery drove away the birds in great numbers depriving them of nesting and feeding places, and in many places he had observed great detriment in park preserves from this cause. He thought that the Commission had been very unfortunate in having the advice of Prof. Charles S. Sargent,

for, while he did not question his standing and knowledge as an arboriculturist he did consider him incompetent to deal with forestry from the standpoint of an artist.

Mr. Enneking was next called. Last year the Boston Art Club appointed him to examine into this matter, and he found that many trees had been cut down, and from an artist's point of view great harm had been done. It might be necessary to experiment with trees in an arboretum, but it should not be done in a park. Art and science looked at things from very different standpoints. The artist dwells upon the natural and accidental. No scientist can reproduce exactly the effects of nature. He cannot compete with the Almighty, although great things have been accomplished in landscape gardening. At the same time many of these things had better have been left undone, and while securing thereby the real object, great and unnecessary expenditures would have been saved. Just as far as possible nature should be left untouched, even to the remaining of a dying tree. The speaker became eloquent in the course of his remarks.

Mr. Frank T. Merrill, Mr. G.C. Mann and Mr. T.J. Stearns specified several places where the thinning-out process had been in operation, despoiling the beauty and seclusion. Dr. Gerry and Mr. William Rotch spoke effectively in the same line: Did not come to scold, but to offer an earnest protest. They were not all experts, but they had a love of nature, and were pained at the work that had been done.

The remonstrants were heard by Chairman Charles E. Stratton and Acting Commissioner John T. Wheelwright. Commissioner Laban Pratt was ill and therefore was absent. In reply, Mr. Stratton said that the Commission was glad to give the remonstrants a hearing, and preferred to meet them rather than to have them rush into print. There was no difference existing in the matter of desire of making the parks beautiful, but naturally those conducting the work might on good grounds differ as to how the object should be accomplished. In support of his statement, Mr. Stratton said they had bought 30,000 trees and 100,000 shrubs to be set out. They were governed by the advice of Prof. Charles S. Sargent of Brookline, who is an authority of arboriculture. Nothing had been stripped, and the cutting and other work that had been done would make the growth denser. Trees that interfered and that were dying had been removed. The object is to promote natural conditions, and in order to preserve the parks in their best form for the future a certain amount of attention is necessary.

Mr. Wheelwright, residing from boyhood near the park, felt that he could speak from observation as a citizen as well as knowledge gained on the Board. The Commissioners regretted the removal of underbrush from the shores of Jamaica Pond, but it was necessary to insure future growth to the trees. Prof. Sargent was averse to the removal of shrubbery except when necessary.

Explanation was given of some of the other work. They must have a plan, and in some instances resort to artificial means and effects; sometimes thus in the planting of border trees. The work done around Jamaica Pond and the Parkman estate would be for the better. The Dabney place\* at Franklin Park was so dense and dark that something had to be done. The Commission wished to keep this domain entrusted to them in its natural beauty, and they had resorted to the best advice possible - Prof. Sargent. The superintendent, Mr. Pettigrew, was a lover of nature and a man of wide experience in the work.

At the request of Chairman Stratton, Mr. H.E. Hunnewell of Wellesley spoke in defence of the Commissioners' methods. The hearing was then closed, Mr. Stratton stating that the matter would be considered and an answer would be given later.

The following letter from Prof. Sargent was read by Mr. Stratton, during his reply to the remonstrants:

One would suppose, in reading the letters on the subject in the newspapers, that large areas in the parks had been deforested, that is, stripped of their trees. The truth is, that not part of the park has been stripped of its trees, and what cutting has been done will have the tendency to make the tree-growth denser and therefore more valuable. It is safe to say that there is not one person in this community, not excepting Mr. Pettigrew himself, who could point out with certainty any spot where a tree was cut in the parks last year without examining the ground to find its stump. This simply means that when trees are judiciously thinned out, those that remain grow so rapidly that they soon fill up vacant spaces, and the cut trees are not missed.

A great deal of the cutting which is being done in Franklin Park is undertaken with the intention of restoring the woods, as far as possible, to their natural condition by the removal of what may be called tree weeds, like locusts, wild cherries, etc., which have spread through man's agency, and which so cover in some places the surface of the ground that there is no opportunity for the development of the natural under growth.

I feel perfectly satisfied that everything that is being done is all right, and all I can say is that if the land was my own I should treat it in the same way. They (the objectors) are incapable of looking ahead or realizing what would become of the parks at the end of a few years if the trees were allowed to remain neglected as they have been.

\*In the Wilderness section; along Forest Hills Street between, roughly, the present day Williams street entrance and Jamaica Towers Nursing Home. The area today is, in parts, still "dense and dark" and the Franklin Park Coalition cut down quite a bit of secondary growth in 1982-3.

—Editor



SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF  
ALDERMEN ON INVESTIGATION OF  
THE PARK DEPARTMENT.

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MAJORITY REPORT.

To the Honorable the Board of Aldermen:

GENTLEMEN, - Your committee, appointed under the following orders:

Ordered, That the Chairman appoint a committee of seven members of this Board to investigate the management of the Park Department, and, if necessary, to summon persons and call for papers.

Passed.

J.M. GALVIN, City Clerk pro tem.

Ordered, That the special committee of this Board, appointed to investigate the management of the Park Department, be authorized to give public hearings, employ counsel and a stenographer, and incur such other expense as may be necessary ; the expense of the same to be charged to the contingent fund of the Board of Aldermen.

Passed.

Approved by the Mayor\*, February 27, 1900.

Beg leave to submit the following report:

The committee has held fifteen afternoon sessions and five evening sessions. Over forty witnesses have been heard orally, and much documentary evidence has been examined, all of which, together with the arguments of counsel, will be found in the appendix to this report.

The committee was assisted in the preparation of the case and the presentation of evidence by Joseph Lundy, Esq., and the Commissioners were represented by Nathan Matthews, Jr., Esq.

At the first hearing the following specifications were submitted by counsel for the committee:

City of Boston, March 16, 1900.

To the Honorable the Special Committee of the Board of Aldermen appointed February 19, 1900, to investigate the Park Department of the City of Boston:

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\*Thomas N. Hart

The complaint alleges negligence of this department by the Board of Commissioners, and consequent mismanagement, extravagance, gross waste, incompetency and corruption on the part of a number of subordinates of the department.

Respectfully submitted,  
Joseph Lundy,  
Attorney for the Committee.

The period covered by the evidence taken at the investigation was substantially the four years from January 1, 1896, to January 1, 1900; although much of the testimony concerning the landscape features of the parks related to a prior period of time and to the acts of previous Commissioners.

The committee has been obliged to rely upon the Commissioners and employees of the Park Department as witnesses, and while such witness may have been prejudiced, the committee feels that their evidence was honest; but not as full as might be desired.

In the judgement of the committee, the charges have not been sustained by the evidence; and the committee accordingly find that there has been no negligence on the part of the Commissioners, and no consequent mismanagement, extravagance, gross waste, incompetency or corruption on the part of their subordinates....

....Passing now to the work of the Commissioners, in so far as it has affected the general appearance or scenery of the parks, we find that certain changes, such as the introduction of a shrubbery border between the walks and the water line at Jamaica pond, and the removal of the top course of the stone wall on the southerly side of the pond, are changes which were necessary.

The most extensive change in the completed work is that which has been brought about at Leverett park, where most of the artificial pools constructed in 1893 and 1894 have been filled up. These pools were introduced to enable the Natural History Society to carry out an elaborate scheme for a fresh water aquarium. After they were built the society was unable to raise the money required for the purpose, and were compelled to abandon the entire scheme. A change in the water level took place here, and the result was that the city found itself in possession of a large number of small artificial pools, which, owing to the abandonment of the aquarium plans, were meaningless, some of which were dry for a large part of the year, and all of which, owing to their depths and the steepness of their banks, were dangerous for children playing in the parks. Under these circumstances the Commissioners decided to fill the pools and to convert the land occupied by them into open spaces or glades where the children of the neighborhood could play in safety. In connection with this change an artificial water-fall at the outlet of Ward's pond was also removed

for the reason that during the greater part of the year there was no water running over it; and certain walks, built solely with a view to the utilization of the pools for aquarial purposes, were also discontinued. We see nothing in these changes to criticise.

Other minor changes made by the present board of Park Commissioners, such as the removal of the much criticised wall on Glen road in Franklin park, the abandonment of the Valley Gates, which served no useful purpose and were dangerous to travel, and a slight alteration in the parapet at the so-called Funeral bridge in Franklin park have been made.

In the aggregate the changes effected in park work completed prior to 1897 have been few in number; the total cost of them has been only about \$10,500; and all of them have proved to be, we think, desirable changes in themselves.

The original plans for Franklin park contemplated an elaborate course or "Greeting," similar to Rotten Row in Hyde Park, London. The loam was removed in preparation for the roads some time prior to 1896, but with this exception nothing has been done towards the construction of the Greeting, the total cost of which was estimated at from \$175,000 to \$200,000. As it seemed unlikely that public opinion would justify so great an outlay for any feature not strictly necessary, and as the facilities already provided in our park system for those who drive and ride were relatively greater than could be found in any other park in the world, it seemed to the Commissioners, as appears from their annual reports; that a simpler treatment of this portion of Franklin park might be devised which would not only be more economical in construction and maintenance, but more in keeping with the rural scenery and popular uses to which this park was to be devoted.

The cost of the Greeting was accordingly abridged, and at an expense of about \$15,000 the Commissioners have created in place of it a beautiful open meadow, which they have styled the "Glade," and which is already the resort of great numbers of people, particularly women and children, who reach the park on foot or by the cars. The abolition of the Greeting, thus proposed, and further explained in the annual reports of the Commissioners, met, so far as we have been able to learn, with no opposition at the time, and commends itself to the judgment of the committee as a change alike in interest of economy and of the people who use the parks.

A great deal of the testimony taken at the hearings consisted of opinions concerning the propriety or necessity of the alterations made in the so-called natural scenery of the parks, particularly Franklin park, and concerning the cutting and felling of trees and shrubs.

Most of the artificial features introduced into the parks, which were complained of by the witnesses, such as the roads in the Wilderness, the water works in Franklin park, the wall in Glen road, the so-called Funeral

bridge, the refectory at Franklin park, the stone steps in Franklin park, the walks and wall around Jamaica pond, the artificial pools in Leverett park, the cascade in Leverett park, and the planting of exotic trees and shrubs, were the work of prior Commissioners and are not properly within the scope of this inquiry.

Practically the only changes in the appearance of the parks which have been brought about by the present Commissioners have consisted in some slight thinning of trees in the Wilderness, in a partial and not satisfactory reconstruction of the plantations of the Fens, in the construction of boundary walls about some of the parks, and in the planting of border plantations around the edges of Franklin park.

The objections to boundary walls and plantations seem to be based upon a misconception of the true functions of a public rural park. We can understand that anyone who owns an expensive estate on the borders of Franklin park would derive great pleasure from an uninterrupted view across the park, and that the absence of border walls, or better still, an entrance immediately opposite his house, would add materially to its value. Similar views are not uncommonly held by the abutters upon parks in other cities, who have sometimes had sufficient influence to cause the border plantations, walls, entrances, etc., to be laid out or altered for their private benefit; but the Boston parks have thus far been planned and constructed with a sole view to the rights and interests of the public, and we trust that no departure from this practice will be tolerated by the present Commissioners or their successors in office.

The main object of a country park like Franklin park is to provide a place where the people at large, particularly those who are unable to leave the city, can find within its limits rest, and amid strictly rural scenes, quiet, and a complete change from their ordinary surroundings. People visit such parks for the sake of getting into the country and away from city sights and sounds. Scenes of rural peace and beauty, whither the tired workers of the city may come for physical and moral recreation, are the principal charms of such a park, and the main justification of its cost. The parks belong to the people, not to the abutters, and should be laid out for the benefit of those who visit them rather than for those who remain on the outside. Now, it is obvious that those who visit the parks will not be permitted to enjoy that sense of seclusion from the city which is their right, if the scenery has been so arranged as everywhere to disclose a background of private houses; and accordingly we find that wherever a park is large enough to be treated as a country park, its borders are lined with plantations, so that those who frequent it may, when once within, find as little as possible to remind them of the city.

The boundary walls are intended as a protection for the plantations, and to assist the management in the ordinary control of the park, and, as the evidence indicates, are to be found around nearly every large park



in the United States. Those built for Boston parks are substantial stone fences of moderate height, and we recommend that they be covered with vines as well as screened by trees and shrubs from the sight of visitors.

Some of the witnesses who appeared as critics of the department objected to the cutting and thinning of trees and shrubs which has recently taken place in the plantations and woods. Many of these gentlemen did not pretend to possess any expert knowledge of tree culture: but they assumed, with perhaps some degree of truth, to represent a far larger number of citizens who deplore the destruction of a tree unless its removal be necessary for the safety of those who frequent parks. On the other hand, the evidence was overwhelming that only by the frequent and judicious use of the axe can such woods as were found on our park lands when acquired by the city be restored to a healthy, vigorous, and natural growth; and that if new trees and shrubs are not planted thickly at the outset with a view to subsequent thinnings and such thinnings do not take place, the plantations rapidly deteriorate and may in time have to be entirely renewed. These views were not only pressed upon the committee by all the witnesses, whether friendly to the Commissioners or not, who had knowledge of the subject, but appear to be shared by every recognized authority on tree culture and landscape architecture.

No authority was cited in opposition to these opinions; and the correctness of them has been further demonstrated to the committee by ocular observation of the woods and plantations in Franklin park, the Arboretum, and other parts of the park system, and by specimen trees which were cut down for the use of the committee for the purpose of showing the greater rapidity of growth attained under favorable conditions as to light and soil as compared with that possible under the conditions now obtaining in the Wilderness.

There has been apparently a wholesale removal of apple and other exotic fruit trees from Franklin park, as also of numerous rows of trees along the roads which formerly traversed that territory. These changes, as well as the removal of other trees for the sake of creating openings, glades, and vistas through the woods, were for landscape, as distinguished from arboricultural purposes, and practically all took place before the present Commissioners took office. Little work of this sort has been done by the present Board other than the destruction of certain Norway spruces and other foreign trees which experience has shown do not thrive in this climate. Very few trees, from the evidence, are to be removed for landscape reasons; and the committee feels confident that this work will be carried out with the same disposition to save every thrifty and beautiful tree which has characterized the recent work of the Commissioners. We may refer particularly to the care exhibited in constructing the boundaries on Morton street and Prince street, which in many places deviate from the line that would otherwise have been followed, for the mere sake of saving a tree.



As to the removal of trees for arboricultural reasons whether in the wilderness of Franklin park or elsewhere, the evidence shows that no tree has been cut out by the present Commissioners which was a good tree in itself unless it was injuriously interfering with the life or growth of some other tree. The park woods were not of natural growth, that is, they were not composed of such trees as originally or in a state of nature clothed the surface of the land. They were the product of several generations of reckless tree-cutters, or repeated fires, and of a soil which, naturally thin, had become impoverished by the removal of the forest cover and by the annual inroads of fire. The result was a poor and stunted growth of trees, the absence of natural underwood, and the presence of many species of trees which, though of native origin, would not have been found in Franklin park under natural conditions.

Much yet remains to be done in the way of thinning, and for the protection and improvement of the soil, before the conditions as to soil and light will be such as to permit the gradual restoration of the woods in Franklin park to a natural and healthy condition.

We find that there has been no excessive destruction of trees from either a landscape or arboricultural standpoint, and that, if the coming generation who are to own (and in part pay for) our parks are to find in them beautiful and natural woods of the true New England type, the growth of the trees now standing must be encouraged by annual thinnings, the return of the underwood must be promoted by letting in the light, and reasonable expenditures must be incurred for additions to the soil.

The Committee finds that the change in the line trees in the Back Bay Fens was made necessary by the deficiency of soil in the planting spaces, and by the character and condition of the trees which had been set out on the south and west sides of the Fens. On the easterly side of the Fens no change has been made in the line trees, which appear to be in good conditions, except to make additions to the loam spaces.

The shrubbery plantations at the Fens present a special problem. It appears from the testimony that the Fens were in the first place planted thickly; that the plantations were largely experimental in character, owing to the introduction of many native and exotic herbaceous plants; that it was intended to have them thinned as rapidly as the growth of the plants caused them to be overcrowded; but that, for reasons similar to those already referred to in the case of Franklin park, this necessary work of thinning was not done when it should have been. The consequence was that when the present Commissioners came into office many of the trees and most of the shrubs had been ruined by overcrowding, and by the failure to remove the trees which had been originally planted to serve the sole purpose of nurses.

Considerable thinning, intended to correct the omissions of the past, has taken place during the past three years; but many trees are still standing in the plantations which ought to be removed, either because they are poor trees in themselves, or because of their interference with other and better trees. New shrubs have been planted to take the place of those removed; but the present condition of the plantation as a whole is neither beautiful in itself nor encouraging for the future. We believe that it would have been better to have adopted a more radical treatment with the plantations at the Fens and to have completely reconstructed them, saving only the trees and shrubs which had managed to survive in proper shape. The Commissioners were apparently deterred from the adoption of this heroic remedy by fear of criticism; but this remedy may yet have to be applied before the plantations at the Fens can become an object of beauty, and in that case the hesitation of the Commissioners will simply have resulted in delay. We do not care to express an opinion whether the entire renovation of these plantations is the only thing to be done with them in their present condition, or whether the process of partial renewal adopted during the past three years should be continued. We are content to leave this matter to the judgment of the Commissioners and their expert advisers; and we trust that their decision, whatever it be, will be acquiesced in by the public.

We are convinced that the Park Commissioners are receiving trustworthy expert assistance and advice in regard to the management of the woods, the culture of the plantations, and the treatment of such landscape questions as from time to time arise. We believe that the community is greatly indebted to the Commissioners for the fidelity with which the original idea of the Boston park system has been held in view, and for the success which has attended their efforts to make our parks the most beautiful, useful, and popular to be found in any city in the world. We are convinced also that such is the general opinion of the people of this city, as is perhaps sufficiently indicated by the fact that, notwithstanding the wide publicity given to this investigation, only six persons outside the department appeared before the committee to protest against the present management, and that of these six, three were abutters on Franklin park, having private interests of their own.

There is, in our opinion, no question in which the people of this city are more vitally concerned than the correct management of the parks, upon which over \$16,000,000 of public money has already been expended; and there is probably no question upon which misinformation is more likely to gain popular support than the somewhat technical subject of the proper treatment of trees and shrubs. Although this investigation has not resulted in startling or sensational disclosures, it, and the expense incurred by it, will, in the opinion of the committee, be amply justified if it shall have the result of satisfying the community that the management of the parks is in the hands of persons who understand their duty alike to the people who now resort to them, and to those much greater numbers who will throng them in the future.

We have been impressed with the fact that many of our citizens do not yet realize the full beauty and extent of the parks now open to the public. Doubtless this condition of affairs is largely due to the fact that so large a portion of the parks has been so recently completed, and that the means of access are still inadequate. We suggest that the Mayor and Aldermen, who have special jurisdiction over the street railway service of the city, should consider what, if anything, can be done to secure an extension of the street car service to Jamaica Plain and the Arboretum, and to secure better communications with Franklin park, along the line of Columbus avenue and the Columbia road, than now exist.

In fact, your committee believe and find that the method of management of a Park System is subject to different opinions, and that the present Commissioners have tried and we believe successfully, to satisfy the wishes of the general public, if not of individuals. We believe that the Commissioners have had the interests of the city at heart, and that they have given gratuitously services which have resulted in the possession by Boston of a Park System of which she may justly be proud.

M.W. NORRIS,  
ROBERT A. JORDAN,  
PHILLIP O'BRIEN,  
FREDERICK W. DAY,  
EDWARD W. DIXON.

LETTER FROM M.S. BOLLES, FRANKLIN PARK ABUTTER, TO  
PARK COMMISSIONER CHARLES STRATTON:

Boston, Mass., April 6, 1900

Charles E. Stratton, Esq.,  
Chairman Board of Park Commissioners,  
Pine Bank, Jamaica Plain, Mass.:

DEAR SIR, - I beg to acknowledge your favor of the 5th inst., and in reply I beg leave to say that Alderman Gerry is quite right in his information. I addressed a letter September 11, 1899, to the Park Commissioners, Pine Bank, Jamaica Plain, Mass., on the subject of the wall that was then being built on Walnut avenue and Sigourney street. I wrote again September 18, 1899, to the same address. These letters were signed "Helen A. Bolles, by M.S. Bolles, Attorney." They were written on our headed business note sheets. I wrote June 4th, 1899, a letter addressed to C.E. Stratton, Esq., Chairman Park Commissioners, Pine Bank, Jamaica Plain, Mass., in relation to the bicycles carrying lamps at night. No reply was necessary to this, although the courtesy of an acknowledgment would have been appreciated.

September 15, 1899, I wrote a letter addressed, Solomon P. Stratton, Esq., Federal street, corner of Franklin street. A few days afterward Mr. Solomon P. Stratton advised me that the letter was undoubtedly intended for his brother, and he had forwarded the same to him. These are all the communications that my copy book shows, but I have the impression that there were one or two additional ones.

In answering your letter, you have given me an opportunity to express my feeling of great disappointment that Franklin Park has been so disfigured within the last two or three years. When I moved there in 1876, it was a pleasure to look upon it from any point of view. Opposite my house on Sigourney street\*, there was a field of grass that was most cool, and refreshing and beautiful to see in the summer time, backed by a rocky hill where there was growing a choice assortment of trees. To-day I look out on a combination of a nursery-man's and a market-man's garden. The green has all disappeared, and it is fenced in with such a massive wall that all it needs is the sign "Private Grounds, and No Trespassing," to carry out the disfigurement of the landscape. It was my custom to walk across the park very frequently, of a morning or an afternoon on my way to or from business, and I enjoyed every minute of the walk. To-day, I avoid it. On each side of the path, instead of a beautiful green grass border, there are scraggly bushes, and the border promises plenty of dust on pleasant days, and mud when it is rainy.

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\*59 Robeson St., at the corner of Sigourney St., built in 1883, 2 years before Franklin Park was begun. The house still stands.

I cannot understand why the Park Commissioners have such a horror of green grass. Why it is necessary to barricade the park, as has been done, and to destroy all the present beauty in the hope that some time in the future the results may be such that will excuse the present defacement of the grounds. We, all of us in the immediate vicinity of the Park, feel very sore upon the subject, and it was a long time before I could realize that the defacement and the destruction are owing to a permanent plan, and not an occasional episode.

The present hearing, or examination, of the Park Commissioners to my mind, is a matter of very trivial importance compared to the damage that has been done to the park. I wish there was some way of correcting it or modifying it. I do not consider myself an expert, but I do believe that I have the average amount of good taste as pertaining to landscape gardening, to dignify it by that name for want of a better description, and I am quite sure that unless Mr. Olmsted has changed his views, that the acknowledged authority of landscape gardening in this country would be very careful not to leave such a monument of his taste as Franklin Park at the present time presents.

I feel we are helpless in the matter, but sometimes an almost universal public opinion produces surprising results, and I hope that this of mine may add a little weight to the scale, and to the universal unfavorable criticism that I hear expressed, of the management of the park at the present time, and for the last few years. It certainly is not good taste, and it certainly is not economy as all my friends understand it, that has so radically changed the beautiful appearance and plan of Franklin Park.

Yours truly,  
(Signed) MICHAEL SHEPARD BOLLES.\*  
I trust this letter will not fail to reach you.

[Copy.]

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Boston, Mass., April 9, 1900.

Mr. Michael S. Bolles, 19 Kilby St., Boston:

DEAR SIR, - I thank you for your letter of April 6, giving me the dates of four letters sent by you to this department, whose receipt was not acknowledged, and the subjects of three of the letters. Judging by the date of the fourth, I presume its subject was the same as that of the first two mentioned, the wall on Walnut avenue and Sigourney street.

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\*Michael S. Bolles was a Boston Banker.



With the approval of counsel for those objecting to this wall, general acknowledgment of all letters on this subject was made to him, with notice of a public hearing and notice of the decision in favor of the objectors...

As to your general criticism of our treatment of Franklin Park, I am sorry that you neglected the opportunity to give your testimony at City Hall before the Investigating Committee of the Board of Aldermen. You will have an opportunity later to hear there our statement of the management of that park.

I will only say now that we regard the parks as made for the many who use them rather than for the few who live on their borders, and that perhaps you may be deceived in thinking that you have "an almost universal public opinion" with you.

As it is our intention that the receipt of every letter to this department, however, mistaken, violent or abusive, should be acknowledged, I can only express my regret at our seeming lack of courtesy toward your communications.

Yours truly,  
CHARLES E. STRATTON,  
Chairman.

TESTIMONY OF PARK COMMISSIONER CHARLES STRATTON:

... Q. Well, Mr. Matthew S. Bolles\*, if you press me. Mr. Matthew S. Bolles, who has a beautiful place on Sigourney street. He informed me to that effect.

A. [Commr. Stratton] And on what subject was the letter?

Q. Well, the letter was a complaint of his, that he had written to your Board three or four times, without the courtesy of a reply. I have that letter, if you care to see it.

A. I would like to make a minute of it. I can only say this, that if any one wrote a letter to me and did not get an answer, there ought to be some very good reason for it.

Q. He doesn't say he wrote to you.

A. No; but the letter ought to have been handed to the Chairman, or to some member of the Commission. Do you remember the subject, or subjects?

Alderman Gerry. - Mr. Lundy has the letter. I would with to refresh my memory. The reason I ask was that it has been the very general impression that it was very hard to get to at your Board, officially.

Mr. Lundy. - What was that you wanted, Mr. Gerry?

Alderman Gerry. - That letter of Mr. Bolles'. I handed it to you.

Mr. Lundy. - And I haven't it here. It was Mr. Matthew S. Bolles, and his office is at 60 State street, I think.

The Witness. - I know him by name very well. I can only say that I regret that any such thing occurred - and I say that it is not very difficult to get at me.

Alderman Gerry. - No, I know that to be a fact; but I am speaking of the Board, and in your capacity as a member of that Board.

Q. (By Alderman Gerry.) Would it also surprise you if there had been other complaints of that kind?

A. It would, very much indeed; and I am very glad to hear the name or names of any person or persons who have written to our Board and not received an answer - and a respectful one at that.

Q. Would it surprise you if a gentleman of standing and so on had written to me saying that the attitude of the Board - I am simply quoting from memory, and, of course, the phraseology may have been a little different from what I state - that the attitude of the Board towards the community seemed to somewhat similar to that described as being the attitude of the President of the New York Central Railroad as regards the community at one time?

A. Well, of course, I cannot accept as the general opinion how one person would view my attitude or your attitude. All I can say is that if they wrote me at my address, or the Board, a communication, if they did not get an answer, and a courteous one, I should be very much surprised and very sorry -

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\*The name was "Michael S. Bolles."

Q. I felt, knowing you as well as I do, that you were not the one that received the letter.

A. (Continuing) - and I shall look into any case that is given to me; any name of any citizen of Boston, or any citizen of the United States, who wrote to me, or whose letter got to me, that I did not answer it, while a member of the Board.

Q. Then you are surprised that that is the feeling throughout the community, that your Board is hard to approach?

A. I should be surprised to know that, and also very sorry.

Q. Well, I will see that you have that letter, if Mr. Lundy can find it. Now, there is another matter, Mr. Stratton. Of course, you know very well about that building which is half restaurant, half - well, I don't say what the other half is - up at Franklin Park.\* How much did that cost? How do you pronounce that - per'gola or pergo'la?

A. Per'gola, I believe. I think it is pronounced both ways.

Q. You remember about that building, do you not?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember what it cost?

A. It was built before my time, but I think some bills lingered on. It cost a very large sum of money.

Q. I am very glad that it wasn't built during your time. I didn't know that, and I am glad to have that wiped off the score. But I would like to ask you if that circular horse shed was built during your time?

A. I am afraid it was.

Q. Well, will you tell me how much that cost?

A. Well, whether the contract were made before I went on the Board or not, I don't remember. It was built the first summer that I was on the Board, and I cannot remember whether it was contracted for before or after I became a member.

Q. Well, would it surprise you if I told you that it cost, if my memory serves me right, in the neighborhood of fourteen thousand dollars?

A. I am afraid your memory is correct.

Q. Now, you say you had nothing to do practically with voting the money or approving the plans in connection with that?

A. I won't be sure. It was my first entrance on the Board.

Q. If I recollect aright, your name and Mr. Pratt's name appear in the reports of that year, appear in the records, I believe, at the time when it was discussed.

A. Mr. Hodges was chairman then, and he was a horseman and very much interested in horses, and naturally took more interest in providing a place for horses. But whether it was contracted for before my time, I would not be sure. If it was contracted for while I was on the Board, it was shortly after my advent.

Q. Now, considering the purpose for which that was built, do you or do you not consider that such an expense for such a fortress, so to speak, stone fortress, was justifiable financially? Was your Board justified in spending \$14,000 for a place like that, simply to keep a horse in for

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\*The Refectory.

anywhere from five to fifteen minutes, while a person was in the restaurant? That was supposed to be the reason for it, wasn't it - to put a horse there while the rider was in the restaurant?

A. Yes. Personally I think I could tell you what I think about the Refectory and that horse shed, but the horse shed, of course, was an adjunct of this very extensive and expensive refectory.

Q. Four hundred thousand dollars didn't that refectory cost, somewhere around there?

A. I think it cost about \$100,000.

Q. I thought it cost more?

A. That is a rough guess, but I should say that this horse shed was not expensive compared with the building to which it was an annex. The whole scheme was something before my day, and was as I am told, and as I think we can easily understand, built on the idea that our parks would be like those on the Continent of Europe, that we would have these beautiful sort of hotels and fancy cuisines in the country.

Q. By the way, of course you have been abroad a number of times?

A. I have been, yes.

Q. Did you ever see a public horse shed like that in Europe, or anything of the kind?

A. I have not, no.

Q. I have been across once or twice and I never have. I am afraid I interrupted you.

A. It is an idea as to the use of the park which subsequent experience, I think, has shown to be a mistaken idea. But I am not criticising those who went before me.

Q. Then you are not surprised that certain citizens thought that was an extravagance?

A. I am not.

Q. Of course, you are familiar with what are called the Valley Gates?

A. Yes.

Q. And you know that a part of them were taken down?

A. Yes.

Q. And that while they were there they were iron gates?

A. Yes.

Q. Well, what do iron gates cost? What did those cost at Bussey or the Arboretum?

A. I dislike to give figures, without referring to the records.

Q. Wasn't it about \$5,000 that those gates cost?

A. All of them?

Q. Yes.

A. It is quite possible. There are a number of gates there you know.

Q. Well, the iron gates that were there at the place I mention, Valley Gates, were taken away?

A. Yes.

Q. Well, what became of them?

A. I don't know.

Q. Well, would you be kind enough to have it definitely brought to the notice of this committee just what became of them?

A. Yes.

Q. Whether they were stored, whether they were sold - and, if so, for how much were they sold - or whether they were given away.

A. I will simply say this, that my recollection of the gates is that they were not as ornamental gates as those of the Arboretum.

Q. No; that is true.

A. But I will find out, Mr. Alderman.

Q. If you will let the investigating committee have those facts, I shall be very much obliged.

A. And I shall be very glad to give them.

Q. Now, just a word on the golf privilege at Franklin Park. Do you know anything about that, Mr. Stratton?

A. Well, would you like to have me tell you briefly the story of the golf links?

Q. Yes.

A. Mr. Hodges was chairman\* at the time golf was introduced. We had quite a little discussion about it, and perhaps two or three. Mr. Hodges was quite enthusiastic on the game, and Mr. Pratt and I didn't play it. We at the time thought, and I still think, that it is giving up a good deal of space in Franklin Park for the game, considering the size of the field and the size of the golf links; but it became very popular, and it was frequented by a very large number of very good people, and we have said to them, and still say, that as long as we find it does not interfere with the general enjoyment of the public, golf will be continued. The plan adopted was this: We gave the golf players the golf links, and therefore we consulted the golf players as to how it should be carried on. They were very enthusiastic about a certain Will Campbell from Scotland, and they thought his presence was very necessary to the success of the game. We therefore allowed Campbell a certain fee, after consultation with the leaders in the golf movement, for taking care of the green and going around over each course - if that is the correct term - that was played on the links. He also had certain privileges of mending, and, I think, of selling, golf material. This year we made up our minds, I think rather against the wishes of several of the golf players, to make the course entirely free. We came to the conclusion that any game that was played on the public parks ought to be free to everybody. We have made it free to everybody, and we thought we ought to take care of the green ourselves, allowing Campbell still the right to instruct and repair golf material, etc.

Q. Now, the game was played there for at least a season before he came on at all?

A. I think so.

Q. Unrestricted?

A. Yes, I think so.

Q. Is he allowed any quarters on the field there?

A. He had a little shop, and his wife was also there. These gentlemen were very positive that she was of very great assistance to the young girls and ladies.

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\*Park Commissioner Hodges.



Q. Well, at the present time one has to satisfy Mr. Campbell that he can play golf before he is allowed on the field?

A. Not now.

Q. Well, up to last season - before you made this recent rule?

A. Well, what was done was this: A permit is given from the Park Headquarters.

Q. And who passes upon that permit?

A. It is probably passed upon by the Secretary.

Q. Mr. Clarke?

A. Yes. They have to state their experience in the game in this application.

Q. Well, now in reference to this headquarters that Mr. Campbell occupies, how large a place is that?

A. My recollection would be that it might be as large as from me to the Chairman in length, and perhaps twice the width of this table. It was a rough sort of shanty.

Q. Well, who erected it?

A. I presume that my department did. Mr. Pettigrew could answer all these questions better than myself.

Q. Did you understand it was erected for the accommodation of Mr. Campbell?

A. It was erected for the success of the game. Understand me, I am not sure that we did pay the cost; but if it was paid by the department, it was because it was for the general interest of the lovers of the sport.

Q. Now, you don't know whether or not anybody else had ever applied for that privilege which Mr. Campbell enjoys?

A. I don't remember any one having applied.

Q. Do you know any rule in the department that would preclude my going upon the Franklin Park links with my own instructor, or of going on myself and instructing anybody else?

A. Not now.

Q. Well, I mean up to the time of the last revision of your rules?

A. That is something that I have not considered, because it was never brought to my attention, but I don't think there was anything that would have prevented you from taking your own instructor - although there may have been an exclusive privilege given him; but, if so, it is something that was never called to my attention.

TESTIMONY OF NATHAN HASKELL DOLE.  
APRIL 3, 1900

Q. (By Mr. Lundy.) What is your full name?

A. Nathan Haskell Dole.

Q. Where do you live, Mr. Dole?

A. I live on Glen road, next to the park - 91, renumbered.

Q. And what is your business profession?

A. I am engaged in literary work. I suppose it might be best expressed in one word, if that is possible, by the word literarian. I don't know any other word that expresses it.

Q. You have lived for some time on the edge of the park system, have you not?

A. About fifteen years.\*

Q. And during that time you have paid more or less attention to the condition of the parks?

A. Naturally. It has been my back door - my back yard.

Q. Now, will you state to this committee what the condition of your back yard has been for the last three years?

A. Well, my back yard consists of what used to be called the Country Park. It was a park that belonged I think, to Mr. Sawyer, and was taken by the Park Commissioners under the right of eminent domain. It was in a semi-state of nature, or in a state of semi-nature. It consisted of a hill, separated from another hill by what is now called Glen road, and was rather rocky, with rather stony soil, and with a growth of comparatively small trees. There were a few pretty good trees, the most of which have since disappeared; the small trees are still there - at least, some of them. It was a wild place, and in its state of wildness had a certain charm. Since I have lived there, the Park Department has built a series of roads, rather intricate roads, through this country park - through this wild park. There was built in the first place skirting it almost entirely, a foot path. Then, there was a trotting path, and then there was a hard and firm, wide avenue, or road, or driveway. It was constructed in such a way that in many places where before you would see nothing but wildness, you have a view of at least five roads, making it look very little like a wilderness, to my mind. It, of course, brought it within the power of those who had carriages and bicycles, and the few who had horses, to get in there; but I have seen very few of them there; and the charm of it was very largely dissipated, to my mind, by this construction of artificial roads through it. Then, afterwards a large part of it, or at least quite a park of it, was cut off, and the reservoir was built - an expensive reservoir. I think it is a brick lined reservoir to hold the water for watering the parks and it was connected by a very long pipe, I think, with Washington street. I don't know, but I suppose that that reservoir is full. It was a great deal more interesting before it was full than since it has been full.

Q. Now, do you know Professor Sargent at all?

\*Since 1888, to be exact, when the house was built.

A. I don't know him personally at all.

Q. But you have seen some of his work there?

A. I have seen work that has been attributed to him.

Q. Well, work that has taken place since he has been the adviser to the Park Commission?

A. Yes; for instance, in the hill opposite my house, which when I first went there, was a very charming little nook. Any person going up into it then would almost think themselves in the White mountains, or so far away from the city that they would hear or see nothing of civilization, although they were really only five seconds from the street. That has now become as bald as my head. It is not an ideal state of either man or hill. The large pine trees have been cut away. When I first went there, we had Scarlet Tanagers and blue-birds, and the wren, and ever so many of the wild birds. Since this has been done, we find nothing but collections of English sparrows - about as fine a collection as you can find anywhere outside of the Boston Common. I believe that always follows where are and civilization, or rather where art, follows nature.

Q. Now, do you know anything about a stone wall on the Jamaica way?

A. I know that the stone wall used to be up there, from the corner where my estate abuts over to Blue Hill avenue, right up between the two hills, the two hillocks, on the right hand side of Glen road. It was like a scar across the bosom of Venus of Milo. It was filled in with loam behind it, and bushes of all sorts were put in there. It was supposed that these vines and other things would grow down over it, but they didn't. It was just high enough to furnish a convenient sitting place for lovers, just high enough for a dog to jump over if he wanted to, just high enough to spoil the outline of the glen, but not high enough to be of any use. It was all taken down last spring and carted off, and I suppose some of it was put in the stone wall that now skirts Sigourney street, to the utter ruin of Sigourney street. I might say there that, of course, all this sort of thing, the devising and building of a park system, must be necessarily the work of generations and the work of successive committees or managements; so that it may be very hard to put your hand on some responsible person. But it has seemed to me all the time that where the city of Boston was so deeply in debt it was foolish to spend so much money in unnecessary things, which our grandchildren will have to pay for. I think, for instance that this stone wall which is now, at enormous expense, being placed around the park, might far better be left until our grandchildren, who will have to pay for it, decide that they want it themselves; and the money that will pay for it, if put on interest, would take every poor child from the city out to the park every Sunday during the summer for one hundred years to come. I consider it a perfectly foolish waste of money. It is not an American idea - an effete European idea, to keep people out of their own property. It does no good, except to keep a baby from looking over the wall into the park. There is no beauty in it. There is nothing to it but a little cement and some stones, which might very much better be in their native places. There are certain parts of the park where a stone wall may be advantageous; but to put an entire stone wall around the whole park, - and a stone wall as ugly as this one along Forest Hills street and Sigourney street is - I consider not only wasteful, but wicked. It is the same way along by the pond. The stone wall that skirts the pond -

Q. (By Mr. Matthews.) Which pond?

A. Jamaica pond. It seems to me it is injurious. I know -

Q. You mean the wall is injurious?

A. I think the wall is injurious to the beauty of the landscape. I know that in private places in New England where there used to be fences and stone walls, they are taking them out, and are simply marking the bounds in some way. That, of course, is a matter of taste. Some people like stone walls; but to me "Stone walls do not a landscape make."

Q. (By Mr. Lundy.) Have you ever made any protest to the Park Commissioners?

A. Well, I suppose I have.

The Witness. - I have written a number of articles and have talked with various members of the Park Commissioners. I have been around with artists, and with landscape gardeners, and more or less with those who are interested in the subject of forestry - because I am very much interested in that myself, although I am not experienced in it. Nor am I an artist - simply a private individual who likes to see money spent advisedly and to the best advantage. I know how it is in private life. If anybody borrows money, that money is a great deal easier spent than if earned. Therefore, I think it is the same with the city, when I hear that the city of Boston has paid \$1,016 for a single flagpole, to put in the centre of the Playstead - and a large part of that was spent on the guys. A thousand or more dollars were spent upon it. It was a single stick, costing considerable, that was brought from the far West - I believe from out in Washington - and was put up in the Playstead; and having been there a short time - I suppose because it was not a beautiful example of grace, although it was interesting as a single stick - it suddenly disappeared, and, I believe, was put up in Franklin Field. A large part of the money was spent on guys, however, and I suppose they may be there still. There is now no flagpole on the Playstead, and the flag of our country doesn't wave over it. As for the cutting down of trees, I am not a crank upon that subject. I believe that trees must be cut down. There are certain times when a tree deserves to have its head cut off, just as there are certain officials of the city whose heads deserve to be cut off. There are certain portions of the park where an arboriculturist's idea of a tree should certainly obtain. The arboriculturist desires to see a tree with every limb perfectly balanced, with every sense of proportion and symmetry observed. The artist does not like such a tree as that, and never paints it. And what I object to in the whole work of the Park Department in the cutting of trees is that instead of leaving the unsymmetrical and interesting trees, which were not perfect, which sometimes had limbs that were decaying, and which should be cut off, they have cut down the trees altogether. We would not cut off or kill all our grandfathers, simply because their hair was white or they had lost to a certain extent the sense of hearing. These old trees were ruthlessly cut off, to let the younger ones spread their limbs out. I had rather see the old tree die and lie where it fell, except so far as it is dangerous to those passing by, than to see that done which has been done. Of course, any limb that is dangerous should be cut off. I have noticed that a great many quite beautiful specimens have been sacrificed - just as a few years ago an interesting rocking stone was destroyed. There was a stone there that a boy could rock and yet it was in no danger of falling over on him. That was broken up and put into the rocks along the road.



People would have come hundreds of miles to see that, because it was one of those interesting phenomena of nature - a rocking stone left there by the Ice Age. There is one thing that I wish to speak of. The majority of people who criticise the park criticise the trees from their summer aspect. In the summer, of course, as everyone knows, one single tree will do much more for a shade than in winter a dozen will do. If anyone wants to see how the park looks in winter, they must look at it at the present time, when the trees are bare. This is, indeed, the loveliest time to observe a tree.

(By Alderman Gerry.) I would like to ask Mr. Dole if he knows of many large trees that have been cut down?

A. Yes, I have known of a good many large trees being cut down - along Forest Hills street, especially. There were some very large trees there. A great many clumps of trees were destroyed there. And a great many were destroyed when the Jamaica way was built, across on the left hand side as you go down to Forest Hills street. There were a great many interesting trees there that had been imported at large expense - very interesting varieties of trees. I have forgotten the name of the man who lived there, but he imported them, and took great pride in them, and a great many of them were sacrificed to build that bridge - and I think of all the ugly bridges that were ever constructed, that one allows us to be carried to the cemetery under it is the worst. I think it would bring people either to life or -

Q. (By Mr. Matthews.) Which bridge is that?

A. The one that carries Jamaica way over to Forest Hills street, to Forest Hills Cemetery. It is known as the "Funeral Bridge." If happens to be of very inferior form and inartistic in shape. A bridge is one of the most beautiful things there is if it is well formed.

Q. (By Alderman Gerry.) Mr. Dole, what is your general impression, if I may ask, of the policy of the Park Department this last five years, as regards useless waste of money, extravagance and waste, and the tendency, when they have once got a thing settled, to tear that up or break it down, and put something else in its place? Have you noticed anything of that sort?

Mr. Matthews. - Well, Mr. Chairman, I haven't any objection to the witness answering that, if he has noticed any wasted or extravagance; but I don't think it is fair to express a general impression, unless he knows of some specific facts.

Q. (By Alderman Gerry.) Well, I will ask you, Mr. Dole, if you have noticed anything of that sort?

Mr. Matthews. - That is all right.

The Witness. - It is rather hard for a private person to judge of useless waste in detail.

The Chairman. - I understand the question to be if he has noticed any extravagance or waste.

The Witness. - I have noticed this, that there has been an entire reversal or reversion, of the apparent policy of the former landscape gardener of the park, which was Mr. Olmsted. As every one knows, he took a waste in New York City - the very waste of New York City, in fact - and made it blossom like the rose. He laid out Franklin Park with a view, apparently of leveling hills and



putting in ponds, and of building up hills where there were no hills before. It seemed to me that it was a very extravagant and useless way of reorganizing nature. He also set out a vast number of shrubs - too many shrubs, it seemed to me, altogether. The apparent policy of the present management has been to undo as far as possible very nearly all that Mr. Olmsted had done. If that had been omitted in the first place, I think it would have been wise; but having begun that way, as this was all done with borrowed money, it was foolish, very foolish indeed, to undo it. I should not approve of such a thing in any private person. If a man has a million to spend, I have no right to criticise him for undoing what he has just done; but I think that the city of Boston, which is borrowing money to do these things, has been doing so foolishly. I think that every one has seen, as they have ridden along on a bicycle or in a carriage, that a tremendous amount of undoing has been done between Jamaica Pond and the Back Bay Fens. What will become of it later, I do not know; but at the present time it is unpleasant to see. I never liked the putting in of non-indigenous plants and shrubs there. I think it was foolish; but, they having been put in there, I believe in letting them stay there until the city of Boston is able to pay for taking them out as it goes along with the work. We are borrowing money, which our children will have to pay for; and the unnecessary expenditure of money has been foolish. I do not believe I would go into any chargers of robbery or jobbery or anything of that sort, but I simply say that, when one borrows money it is vastly easier to spend it than it is to earn it - and we have been borrowing money for all this work. There is one other thing that I might mention, and that is the way Jamaica Pond was ruined by the landscape gardening of it. It had certain lines which were very charming. The side toward Pond Street was built into a sort of a quay of hewn stone, and made as ugly as anything could possibly be, the outlines of the pond were very largely changed, a walk was built along the edge of the pond, which may have been necessary, and the width of the pond was very materially diminished - very much to the injury of the pond, which is not any too large, anyway. That, I think, was unnecessary, although it was felt by the landscape gardener that the tramping of thousands of feet would have a tendency to make it muddy and very unpleasant; but certainly in the state it was put into, it was very ugly - better to keep people off and have beauty than to let people go on and have ugliness.

Q. (By Alderman Gerry.) But still, for all that, I believe you think, Mr. Dole, like a great many of the rest of us, that although that wall on Pond Street was very ugly, still inasmuch as it had already been put there and all built and paid for, it ought to be allowed to remain. What is your opinion in regard to going to the extra expense of tearing that down and putting the location in the condition it is in at present?

A. Well, as I said before, I think it was foolish to put it in there, but still more foolish to pull it up at the present time. They should have let it go for fifty years, until we were able to pay for tearing it down and doing whatever we wanted done. Then, perhaps, by that time the stone would have been valuable. I believe they claim that the centre of population is now in Jamaica

Plain. Perhaps by that time the centre of population might have got a little beyond us, and we might have built it into a City Hall. Then, again, it might have been used for relics - broken up and used for relics.

Q. Do you think it could have been broken up and used for some purpose in the park?

A. I do not see why it could not have been broken up and used for repairing the roads, which certainly need a good deal of repairing, and have not been well taken care of while these expensive improvements were going on.

TESTIMONY OF JOHN J. ENNEKING\*  
APRIL 4, 1900

...Mr. Enneking, do you recall at this time any particular part of the park, the natural beauty of which appeared to you to have been destroyed by the system at present followed?

A. Going in from Jamaica Plain - I can't remember the name of the street, but it has been thinned out so in that section that there is no mystery left, no suggestion. You can look into it and see through it, and it looks barren. Wherever there were two or three trees in a bunch, one or two have been cut down. It evidently seemed that somebody wanted to raise big trees, and from that standpoint I think the proceedings were elegant, excellent, in order to make what you may call a grove of fine trees, but at the sacrifice of all that we artists love - that is, the characteristic New England features of a landscape. Those have been, to me, destroyed. Of course, to a certain extent, it has to be said to be fair and honest, that, in order that there may be fine driveways in a park it has to be made to a certain extent artificial, but it seems to me there has been a little bit of carelessness in preserving that I value far more than anything in our beautiful New England landscape - the lines and groupings of trees. The naturalness has all gone. To me it looks strange. Before it was bought for park purposes it was an Eden of beauty to artists. They would flock there and paint their pictures. But I doubt if any of them would go there now. I would like a little of that left, a little of it preserved.

Cross-Examination.

Q. (By Mr. Matthews.) I understand that your criticism would apply to the entire management of the parks since their acquisition by the city, to the entire series of Park Commissioners who have had charge?

A. In a general way, I am not in sympathy with anything where construction has been going on and landscape gardening, so-called, has been done.

Q. And that was going on, of course, long prior to three years ago?

A. Yes. I talked upon the matter with Mr. Eliot, of Olmsted & Eliot. I was so much exercised at the expenditure of money on the boulevards, and the shrubbery and things that they were adding so profusely, which to me seemed to be all out of place, that I took Mr. Eliot over the place one day. He reluctantly allowed that it really probably was so, that they had done too much in that way, that there was too much artificialness. But there is one thing to be said in regard to all these matters. I want to be as fair as I can, and to say that there has to be a great deal of experimenting if you want anything very fine. But there is one great danger here; if you once destroy the natural

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\*Enneking was a well known New England artist who lived in the Hyde Park section of Boston. Until 1912, Hyde Park was a separate town and Enneking was its Park Commissioner. One of his finest paintings was done in 1877 of Great Blue Hill, in the present Blue Hills Reservation.

beauty you never get it back again. In a picture or a bit of furniture, or anything else, you can try it over again, but here we have to be, I think, a great deal more careful than with any ornament, on a building, for instance. Mr. McKim, at the Public Library, took, I think, six months before he could get the ornamentations to go in complete harmony, and how much money was spent in order to get it! It didn't make any difference how much he destroyed and spoiled, he could always reproduce it again. But in nature, if you once blot out these beautiful spots that we have in such abundance, when they are once destroyed that is the end of them. No landscape gardener or Commissioner can ever make them beautiful again. That is why I am anxious, very anxious, that we should preserve all the natural beauties and features of our parks that we have now.

Q. Do you like the open prospects and vistas that have been created in Franklin Park?

A. There are too many of them, and I think there is too much of what we call "English" about our matter of making parks.

Q. Do you object to the glades and meadows that have been opened up through Franklin Park?

A. There are a great many features I like very much, that have been made.

Q. I ask you about those particular features - the glades, lawns and meadows that have been opened up in the past 15 or 17 years?

A. I am trying to recall some of them. I know that there are many of those that I dislike very much, very much and some I do like. What I dislike is that in doing so you lose more than you gain - that is, for me. I am speaking for myself; I am not speaking for anyone but myself.

Q. Do you understand that when Franklin Park, or the place that is now known as Franklin Park, was bought by the city, in 1883, it was in what you call a state of nature?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think so?

A. It was in a state of nature such as would inspire an artist to sit down almost anywhere to paint. I don't pretend to say that it should be left that way.

Q. But would you call that scenery that existed then the natural New England type of landscape?

A. I would call it so. There is a lot of it left now that I call intensely typical of New England - those oaks and those ledges underneath them. Of course, I am very glad to say that they have not been very ruthless, so far as destroying those are concerned.

Q. Do you suppose any oaks would grow over those ledges in a state of nature?

A. Any oaks?

Q. Yes?

A. They are there now.

Q. Yes, but do you suppose they would grow there naturally?

A. Naturally?

Q. That is, were there any oaks over them in a state of nature?

A. Certainly. There are some there 50 years old - at least 35 years old.

Q. But an oak 35 years old, representing a third or fourth state of growth, wouldn't be there in an original state of nature.

A. That may be true, but I have seen some old ledges and rocks with oak on them that I don't think had ever been cut.

Q. In Franklin Park?

A. I don't say there. I merely say in regard to those there, that for over 30 years, as far back as I can remember. I have seen them, and they look very much the same, as far as I can see to-day. They haven't grown very much in that time.

Q. Are you aware that in eastern New England, in a state of nature, there were no open spaces, no meadows, no glades, no lawns; that there was nothing but a dense mass of forest?

A. I speak of what I know and of what I like.

Q. I am trying to ascertain whether you really believe that what is now called Franklin Park was in 1883 in any condition corresponding to that in which it was found by our ancestors who settled in New England?

A. Certainly - oh, you mean away back? Why, I can't go as far back as that, and I don't care to. What I want to observe is the condition as it was and has been here for the last 30 years.

Q. Then you want things as they were 30 years ago?

A. I want them as they were before the landscape gardener took part in them. I want you to understand that I don't come here to criticise. I come here merely to express my opinion in regard to what I like and what I dislike. I don't come up here to criticise, because there are many schemes of landscape gardening. Some of them are merely what we call engineering; some of them are merely practical; some of them are combined with beauty; and some of them go almost too far in preserving what is beautiful.

Q. What I am trying to get at is simply this. When you talk about a state of nature and the condition in which it is desirable to preserve Franklin Park, you do not refer to the original landscape in its aboriginal condition?

A. No, sir; I do not.

Q. But simply the condition in which you saw it in 1883.

A. Yes.

Q. (By Alderman Gerry.) I suppose your contention is that you don't wish to have the trees, the natural shrubbery and the natural rockery, that is at present in the park system, cut out or destroyed? That is, a large part of it that is there now you wish to have remain where it is and as it is.

A. A large part, but I would say that I would like to have great care taken so as not to hurry to destroy just that that we have now that is beautiful. They have already destroyed a great deal, according to my idea, of just those sort of features.



Q. And you fear that they will destroy more?

A. I am afraid. I should never feel quite satisfied until they have a landscape gardener who can show credentials that he is one who will take care not to destroy the natural beauty.

Q. (By Mr. Matthews.) Just one question. You mentioned the English park systems, in which the growth of large trees is favored. You understand, I suppose, that that result is secured by isolating the trees?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And each tree has, perhaps, a quarter of an acre to spread in?

A. I wouldn't say I know that. I merely saw the trees. How it was brought about I don't know - I suppose it was that way.

Q. Well, as you saw them that was the impression they produced on you?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. As you saw those trees in the English parks you noticed that they were isolated trees?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Each growing by itself, not in contact with others?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, are any trees grown in that way in Franklin Park to-day?

A. It seems to me that that must be the object, to have larger trees.

Q. I wish you would answer the question. Is there a single tree in Franklin Park that is grown in the English park style, all by itself?

A. They are isolated, ever so many of them, but they never are going to be like those trees in England.

Q. Would you point out on a map of Franklin Park where they have any such trees?

A. As they have in England?

Q. Growing in the English park style, which you say is being imitated by our Park Commissioners?

A. I say they are working in that line, that that seemed to me to be the object.

Q. Seemed to you?

A. Yes, I always said "to me."

Q. But in what part of Franklin Park do you find those trees being managed in that fashion?

A. I said it seemed to me to be the object. They haven't arrived at it yet. I said it seemed to me to be the object to get something of that character - big trees - that that was the tendency.

Q. Are you referring to the trees in the Wilderness, so-called?

A. I am referring to the trees along the Jamaica Plain side there.

Q. Well, that is the Wilderness, isn't it?

A. Yes, I suppose so.

Q. That is, you refer to the tree cutting that has taken place in the Wilderness, the woods of Franklin Park?

A. Yes, the woods of Franklin Park. I went over after the cutting and saw, where there had seemed to be two or three together, that one was taken away.

Q. You have answered my question - you rather assumed in your mind that the object of the cutting of the trees in Franklin Park, the Wilderness, was to produce large, isolated trees, such as they have in the parks of England?

A. I didn't say I assumed - I speculated on it.

Q. You speculated on it?

A. Yes.

Q. (By Alderman Gerry.) You don't mean to say that you saw any trees that looked as though they were isolated in any other place than the Wilderness, so-called. Where is the Wilderness, Mr. Enneking?

A. It seems to me it is that strip as you come from Jamaica Plain. I can't remember the names of streets.

Q. Do you know where Mr. Dole lives?

A. Yes, sir - as you come in there, right and left, all along that street to the right and left, as I remember it.

Q. I ask you if you have seen anything like an isolated tree within the last few years around Jamaica Pond and in through that section?

A. I was not so well acquainted with Jamaica Pond before the cutting, but I saw big trees cut down and in my mind I could see no reason for the cutting of them, the largest ones, unless there was something the matter with them, unless they were rotting. But they told me they were sound. I couldn't imagine why they cut them. I merely speculate - I don't assume anything, because I don't understand the scheme.

Q. Well, you were at that hearing at Pine Bank in 1898, were you not?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And your contention at that time was that this thing which you disliked so much was going on at that time?

A. Yes, sir.

TESTIMONY OF CHARLES SPRAGUE SARGENT,  
FIRST DIRECTOR OF THE ARNOLD ARBORETUM (from 1872-1926) MAY 1, 1890

Q. Have you ever had anything to do with the parks in the town of Brookline?

A. I have been Park Commissioner

Q. Yes - for how long?

A. Ever since they have had a Commission, I think.

Q. Ever since they have had a Commission?

A. Yes.

Q. What do you say generally of Mr. Olmsted's connection with Boston parks and his services?

A. I think that Mr. Olmsted deserves well. He has laid out what I think is the finest park system of any of our park systems. I consider that the park system of Boston, as he has laid it out, is the most comprehensive and the most intelligent.

Q. And are you familiar with the park systems in general throughout this country?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Seen most of them?

A. I think so; yes.

Q. Seen many in Europe?

A. Seen them all, I think; yes.

Q. What would you say generally about the Boston park system, as compared with others that you have seen?

A. The system, as a scheme, designed for the convenience of the public, and also with respect to the connection of the parks, is far superior to anything either in the United States or Europe. There are parks in Europe, and perhaps some in America, where there are finer trees and plantations, and where there are, perhaps, better laid-out roads; but as a whole, there is nothing like it in the world.

Q. To whom would you attribute the credit for that?

A. Mr. Olmsted, entirely.

Q. Has there ever been any difference of opinion between Mr. Olmsted and you as to the treatment of trees and the management of parks?

A. Never.

Q. Has anything ever been done on the Boston parks since your connection with the department in derogation of his ideas?

A. No. I don't know what you mean by "connection with the department." I have had no connection with the department. The Commissioners occasionally do me the honor of asking my advice.

Q. You are not connected with the department in any official capacity?

A. No.

Q. I understand that Mr. Olmsted has ceased to be connected with the department?

A. Yes, sir. He is an invalid.

Q. Was he in the habit of consulting you about the Boston parks?

A. We talked it over a great deal; yes.

Q. And since his retirement from active practice, you have advised the Park Commissioners of Boston occasionally?

A. Yes.

Q. And now, my question is whether there has been anything done, speaking generally, in reference to the management of the trees and shrubs of the Boston parks in the past three or four years, in derogation of the principles of that branch of his art that you understood him to hold?

A. No, only I think things have been neglected which he would have liked to have had done, and which I would have liked to have done.

Q. But you know nothing that has been done in derogation of his ideas as you understood them?

A. Nothing.

Q. Taking up the park system in detail, Mr. Sargent, and beginning at the other end, beginning at Franklin Park end, what do you say about the woods in the Wilderness - their history, so far as you know it, and their present condition?

A. Well, the Wilderness is very poor soil. It is a rocky ledge. The trees have been neglected for - well, always, I guess. The trees are full of dead wood. They are in a disgraceful condition for the city of Boston to have any trees in. They are in an especially crowded condition. There has been a little cut out there - very little. It is about time to cut them over again.

Q. Has there many trees been cut out in the Wilderness in proportion to the whole number?

A. Very likely one per cent. - I could not say offhand.

Q. Have the stumps been left?

A. So far as I know. There are lost of them now.

Q. If the committee went through the Wilderness, they could see all the trees that were cut out?

A. Yes, if they were industrious.

Q. Would they find it hard work to find them.

A. Yes. Mr. Parsons and I did, to-day.

Q. You want to be understood as saying that there has been no particular thinning of trees there?

A. No excessive thinning. Diseased, dead and misshapen trees, and trees that have been injuring better trees, have been cut out. There has not been a good tree cut down in the Wilderness.

Q. You want the committee to understand that it is your opinion, based upon all of your experience of the subject, that there has not been a single good tree cut down in the Wilderness in Franklin Park?

A. No, sir; or in Franklin Park

Q. In any part of Franklin Park?

A. Not to my knowledge. That is, by a "good" tree I mean a tree that was not injuring a better tree.

Q. What has been the general effort of the Commission, so far as you know it, in the treatment of Franklin Park and in the general improvements made?

A. It has been to make Franklin Park, in the last three or four years, since Mr. Pettigrew has been superintendent, a piece of representative New England scenery, and to so manage it as to reduce the cost of maintenance to the lowest possible amount, and to make the park, instead of a park for the aristocrats, which we have heard a great deal about, a park for the public - a park where children could go and play, and where their mothers could have picnics.

Q. There has been some talk about the abandonment of the plan for a "Greeting." Will you tell us what that was and why it was abandoned?

A. Well, it was a scheme for the benefit of people in carriages. It occupied quite a beautiful piece of natural scenery, which has been made available for children's playgrounds and for picnics, and for the enjoyment of the public - the public that goes out there to that park either on foot or in the electric cars. That is, those who do not drive there.

Q. Whether a relatively large amount of wagon space has not already been provided for those who use carriages?

A. Those who use carriages live about seven miles from the proposed "Greeting" so that they would have to drive, in going to and coming from the "Greeting," say, from Arlington street, about fourteen miles.

Q. Whether there is practically any public use that can be made of the Back Bay Fens and the Riverway and the Parkway, except by those who drive in carriages or ride horses or bicycles?

A. Only that a few people can walk out there. There is a beautiful walk on each side of the Riverway - a beautiful, secluded, charming walk.

Q. And is there any opportunity for a playground from Beacon street clear out to Franklin Park?

A. There is not a foot of playground from the Common to Franklin Park at present, except in Brookline.

Q. Now to come back to my question, Mr. Sargent, whether or not in your opinion there has been a larger provision already made in the park system of Boston for carriage people - I mean, relatively to the space devoted to those who can see the parks only on foot?

A. Certainly, the proportion in Boston is very much larger than it is in any other American city because you have the enormous parkway, which does not exist in any other city. In our American cities, the parks are isolated parks. The parks may be on opposite sides of the town without any connection. Here they have one combined system. You can start at Arlington street and continue driving until you bring up in South Boston, and remain in the park system all the time.



Q. And there has been enough done for the carriages, in your opinion?

A. Yes.

Q. And that is the reason for the abolition of the "Greeting?"

A. Yes; and economy. You save a couple hundred thousand dollars by giving it up.

Q. Has there been any attempt in Franklin Park to create that which has been called by some witnesses "typical English park scenery?"

A. I don't know what they mean by that.

Q. I have endeavored to ascertain myself. I think they mean isolated trees, growing far apart.

A. There are two very excellent instances of that - the Playstead and this Ellicottdale. It is one of the loveliest things in any park in the world.

Q. Those were both planned by Mr. Olmsted?

A. Yes, sir; and executed by him.

Q. Whether there has been any attempt to reproduce those, or to introduce similar features?

A. Well, in this place where the "Greeting" was taken out. This is a large meadow.

Q. Well, with the exception of the two instances you have mentioned, there are no other portions of Franklin Park that could be called English park scenery, in the sense that I have defined it?

A. No. There are the gold grounds, which is an open hill. I have seen effects like that in German parks.

Q. Has there been any effort to make the Wilderness a tract of that character?

A. Not by this present Commission. They have done no work there except to cut out perhaps one percent of the trees. They have built no walks nor done anything there except to cut out a few trees.

Q. Has there been any attempt to destroy the natural wildness of the scenery in the Wilderness?

A. Not a thing.

Q. Has there been any effort to take out the straggling trees and to destroy the wild appearance of that part of the park, for the purpose of growing isolated specimen trees, as you have done in the Arboretum?

A. No.

Q. And is there, so far as you know, any purpose on the part of the Commission or of yourself to do anything of that sort?

A. It is not my purpose, and I should object very strenuously if I thought the commission were going to do it.

Q. What would you think should be done to the Wilderness?

A. Well, in the first place, I should cut all the deadwood out of the trees to prolong their lives. The decay of the branch follows down into the trunk of the tree, and the result is that the tree decays and blows over. It is hollow. I should do that first. Then, if the Commission could afford it, I should put a great deal of soil there in places. There are some exotic shrubs and herbaceous plants there. I should like to take those out and restore the Wilderness to a state of nature - the condition that it was in perhaps 50 or 100 years ago. There never was good wood there, you know, because there is no soil.

Q. That is the reason you would like to have loam spread there?

A. I would; yes.

Q. You heard Mr. Parsons' testimony about the use of the loam and its value?

A. Yes.

Q. Without asking you to go over the same ground in detail, what do you say as to his testimony?

A. Well, I think loam is a pretty good thing to have in the family if you are interested in trees. The tallest oak trees in the United States grow in the bottoms of Southern Illinois and Indiana, where there is perhaps 16 and 18 and 20 feet of loam.

Q. There is nothing of that kind in New England?

A. No, but the best ground in New England is on the river bottoms - in Lancaster, for instance. That is lovely soil, which has been washed in.

Q. Do you believe that eighteen inches of loam are sufficient for the growth of any tree?

A. Yes, for a few years. It will grow a very good tree for ten or twenty years.

Q. What then?

A. Then, the tree will begin to perish. You will not have a big tree or an old tree. I advocate the free use of loam on the ground of economy. If a tree is planted in good, deep loam, it is a healthy tree. It is not attacked by insects, or by disease nearly so often as it would be if it did not have good, deep loam; and if it is attacked, it throws off the attack, and it doesn't get dead would in it. It is a very expensive thing to cut the dead wood out. If you want to manage a piece of wood economically, get a good body of loam and plant trees in it.

Q. And I understand you that the idea of pruning off the dead limbs is not to interfere with the operations of nature, but to repair or improve the health of the tree?

A. To save the life of the tree.

Q. Otherwise the rotten follows down?

A. It follows down the stem, into the trunk.

Q. And in the end the tree rots?

A. The tree rots, and it blows down or breaks off.

Q. Now, questions have been asked and statements have been made tending to show that trees are found, even in this part of New England, growing to a good height and size in from a foot to eighteen inches of loam - growing in a state of nature?

A. Well, I would like to see them.

Q. What do you say as to that?

A. I should like to know what the condition of the subsoil was, where the roots got the water, and what kind of trees they were. You cannot generalize about these things. Every tree grows differently under different conditions.

Q. Well, isn't this true at any rate, that if you find trees growing well in from twelve to eighteen inches of loam, they would grow better in deeper loam?

A. Yes, I am satisfied of that.

Q. And quicker?

A. The first few years they might not, but they would after a few years, and they would grow very much longer. Trees die of starvation, and not of old age.

Q. Trees in the forest?

A. Everywhere



Steps on the southeast corner of the Playstead  
overlook showing the original picturesque  
plantings and rock garden effects favored by  
Olmsted and William L. Fischer, landscape  
gardener. Photograph about 1895.

Photo: courtesy of the National Park Service.



The same steps in December, 1983. Most of the  
 boulders were removed by Superintendent John  
 Pettigrew in 1898.





Maintenance Yard in Franklin Park. The retaining wall was built of boulders dug up from Franklin Park. These boulders had been placed by Olmsted and his associate William Fischer as part of picturesque landscape features. The brick building on the left is the original stable completed in early 1899.



Glen Road in 1892 shortly after road and wall were completed. Nathan Dole called this wall "the scar across the bosom of Venus of Milo."

Photo-courtesy of the Bostonian Society.





The Forest Hills Entrance Bridge Gates.  
Designed by Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge and  
completed in 1895. Parks Superintendent John  
Pettigrew removed the gates in 1899 and used the  
stone to build the Forest Hills Street boundary  
wall.

Photo: the Boston Public Library Print Department.

(Letter from Superintendent Pettigrew making general comments, etc., and extract from records of meeting of the same date.)

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS,  
JAMAICA PLAIN, MASS., OCTOBER 18, 1897.

THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS,  
PARK DEPARTMENT, BOSTON:

Gentlemen, - Pursuant to instructions from your Honorable Board, your Superintendent has had a plan prepared of an improvement of the northeast corner of Franklin Park, bounded by Blue Hill avenue, Seaver street, the Playstead and Glen lane. The ground in question comprises about 65 acres, and contains a fine timber skirted glade throughout its length north and south. Openings in the timber toward Seaver street reveal pleasing rolling ground, and on the other side fine views across Franklin Park. The north and south ends of this glade are covered with piles of stone and rubbish; another portion near the centre is low or swampy. The levelling of this stone into the swamp and covering with loam would not prove a costly operation.

The addition of plantations of trees and shrubs on the bare spots along Seaver street for screens, and other plantations for landscapic effects and a path bordering the glade just within the timber line, would bring a very beautiful and accessible part of the park into popular use, besides removing an eyesore of long standing at one of Franklin Park's principal entrances.

The work is not of a costly character being, excepting for the new plantations, more in the nature of a restoration of the glade to the condition existing previous to its being torn up for road ballasting material, loam being probably the heaviest item of expense; the loam originally stripped from the surface having been used at other places.

On the slope of Hagborn Hill are two flights of stone steps, which to the observer approaching from the drive are obtrusively inappropriate, and as viewed from the look-out at the top of the hill they are about the only pieces of artificial work in sight, and the view extends to the Blue Hills. The driveway below may be excepted, this, however, could be planted over were the space occupied by the steps available; further, the use of the steps is not so great as to warrant their retention in view of the important considerations above mentioned; their removal would not be an inconvenience, as a walk on an easy grade ascends to the same place from a point a little further east on the roadway; the value of the material for other uses will offset the cost of the removal. For the above reasons the removal of these steps is recommended.

The decrease in the water supply at Ward's pond leaves the chain of three small ponds at the head of the brook nearly dry, thereby entirely destroying the intended effect of the brook scheme, it being now a dry ditch. It is possible that were the brook extended to Ward's pond and a direct connection made with it, and puddled with clay throughout its whole length, such water as flowed into it from Ward's pond might be held and give again a running brook. The fact remains, however, that the three pond holes are useless and unsightly now and without hope of remedy unless a new source of water is furnished. It would seem the better plan to fill them up and cover the spaces, including the bordering walks with loam, and plant with trees and shrubbery, retaining the walks as indicated on the plan submitted.

A plan for a re-arrangement of the walks on the hill and grounds north of Ward's pond is also submitted which, with the changes suggested for Ward's pond, is recommended.

Franklin Field being now the principal recreation ground, your Superintendent would suggest the removal of the flag staff from the Playstead to Franklin Field. In its present location it does violence to its surroundings, but at Franklin Field it would be perfectly proper.

The attention of your Honorable Board is called to the need of gates for the Arboretum entrances. The present method of closing these entrances is crude and disorderly. The ornamental iron workers who have recently figured on our playground fences would, I have no doubt, be glad to submit designs if called upon.

I would recommend the removal of two sets of three wash basins each from North End Beach to the sanitary buildings at Franklin Field. They are not required at the North End, and the space they now occupy might be utilized for four additional bathrooms; this would save the purchase of wash bowls for Franklin Field.

Respectfully submitted,  
J.A. PETTIGREW,  
Superintendent.

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RECORDS. - BOSTON, OCTOBER 18, 1897.

Mr. Pettigrew submitted a report in writing recommending the construction of paths and plantations bordering the glade at the northeast corner of Franklin

Park, the filling of the ponds with the stone and rubbish on the ground, the removal of two flights of stone steps on the slope of Hagborn Hill; the removal of the flag-staff on the Playstead to Franklin Field, the removal of wash basins from North End Beach to Franklin Field and the placing of gates at the Arboretum entrances; also the filling of the three ponds adjoining Ward's pond and a re-arrangement of the walks on the adjoining hill in accordance with the plans submitted. It was

Voted To adopt the Superintendent's recommendations excepting those with reference to the filling of the ponds at Franklin Park and Leverett Park, and the procuring of designs for gates at the Arnold Arboretum.

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TESTIMONY OF JOHN PETTIGREW MAY 1, 1900

Q. What has been done with the trees or plantations in Franklin Park?

A. In Franklin Park we followed the same practice. Franklin Park, a large part of it, was made up of private estates, and a great many trees were planted in lines and in hedges, and in various other ways. Each place would be a self-contained one, and the trees planted in it would have almost no reference to general blending with the surrounding estates. When the houses were removed, there were masses of Norway maples, European sycamores, and various other trees of foreign growth, foreign extraction. We took and thinned these out, as well as trees that were crowding better trees, made a general thinning out of poor material throughout the plantation, also in the old woodlands; but in every case we retained all of the undergrowth, excepting the rum cherry or wild black cherry. Those we took out wherever we found them. They are practically tree weeds. Then, in the Wilderness, our thinning out was done a little more carefully. We did not wish at all to injure the natural appearance of the Woodlands. We simply took out such trees as were evidently injuring other trees of better growth, better appearance; but where nothing had been injured we left the trees to grow together. That is a process, a thing that must be attended to from year to year. I cannot say that the thinning of trees in plantations is ever finished. The axe must never be laid aside, must be continued from year to year as the trees grow.

Q. Did you find exotic trees and shrubs in Franklin Park, and, if so, what have you done with them, giving the reason for your action, if any?

A. Well, it was intended that Franklin Park should be a piece of natural woodland, and exotic trees and shrubs would not be harmonious with that idea. So we removed all exotic trees and shrubs.

Q. What is the general experience that park owners and superintendents have had with exotic trees and shrubs in eastern New England, with reference to their hardiness and their appearance after having been growing twenty or twenty-five years?

A. Oh, well, there are a great many who attempt to grow exotic trees and shrubs that are not hardy, and they have no success with them. There are exotic trees and shrubs that do very well. The Norway maple is an exotic tree here.

Q. That is a success here, I understand?

A. That is a success, and it is one of the very few that can be successfully grown in New England. Some of the Japanese barberries are very successful here, and do very well with us, and some of them have been retained.

Q. What do you say of the Irish junipers and the Japanese retinosporas that have been taken out of Franklin Park?



A. They are not hardy here, and it would be folly to attempt to make a feature of them in any landscape here.

Q. The roads in the Wilderness, and the reservoir in the Wilderness, the wall in Glen road, the Funeral bridge, the wall at Jamaica pond, the walks around Jamaica Pond - I will group them altogether - were any of those works constructed during your connection with the Park Department?

A. Not any of them I think. There were all in existence when I came here.

Q. What do you say about cutting out the undergrowth in Franklin Park? I understood that you hadn't done any of that work?

Q. We saved the undergrowth, and, in fact, all the thinning out of trees was to let a little more light in, so that the undergrowth would flourish a little more; so that herbaceous plants would spring up, and there would be a general improvement in the appearance of the floor of the woodland.

Q. What is your policy with respect to encouraging or discouraging the undergrowth in forest plantations such as you find in Franklin Park?

A. We encourage it all we can.

Q. Does it have any special effect on the trees, and, if so, what?

A. Yes, it protects the trees from the rays of the sun, holds the moisture and is generally beneficial.

Q. Protects the trees - you mean the soil?

A. Protects the roots of the trees from the sun and hot winds.

Q. From sun and hot winds?

A. Yes.

Q. Has there been any rocking stone or large boulder taken away from any part of Franklin Park, under your direction?

A. No, sir; none removed since I have been there.

Q. Mr. Pettigrew, one or two witnesses have said that, in their opinion, it seemed to be the policy of the present administration of the Park Department to encourage English park effects - meaning the growth of isolated specimen trees. Will you state whether that is so or not?

A. That is not so.

Q. Go on.

A. Not in the sense of cultivating specimen trees. The effort has been to improve the growth of trees, to improve their individual appearance, but not in any sense to give each a certain amount of room with reference to the next one, so as to show up a specimen tree.

Q. Is there any part of Franklin Park, or any part of our park system which you would say resembles even remotely the English park scenery that these witnesses have spoken about - meaning lawns and meadows covered with isolated trees, spaced widely apart?

A. Well, Ellicottdale, where the tennis courts are, as far as it goes approaches an English park scene, and the golf meadows do too - open scenery, with scattered trees here and there, scattered groups.

Q. Was any part of the landscape features of Ellicottdale, that you have just mentioned, constructed by you, arranged by you?

A. No sir.

Q. By whom was it laid out?

A. Mr. Olmsted, I suppose, but that is an adaptation of what he found there. Private estates were there, with isolated trees planted here and there, and I presume he thinned out as we have done along Seaver street, when we had the raw material to start with. He did the same thing at Ellicottdale. He thinned out foreign stuff and one thing and another that was not needed, and left these fine trees there.

Q. There had been a good deal of thinning done in Franklin Park before you arrived?

A. Well, the woods didn't have the appearance of having been thinned out, at any rate for a good many years.

Q. Was there any appearance of thinning out trees in some of the open portions of the park?

A. Yes; in the line of the roads. There was a view cut through Abbotswood\*, evidently, a view looking from the Refectory down towards Morton street. There is a gash through Abbotswood 75 to 100 feet wide.

Q. Has there been any effort on your part, or is it any of your policy to treat park trees from the Arboretum?

A. No, sir.

Q. Has there been anything done under your direction in the Boston parks approaching the work that has been done by Professor Sargent at the Arboretum?

A. No, sir.

Q. Nothing of the same sort?

A. No. In the Arboretum the idea is to have a specimen tree, to have it as nearly perfect of its kind as possible, and Professor Sargent prepares very large holes and puts in very good loam and a good deal of it, and gives the very best of treatment, in order to produce the finest effect. We, in planting isolated trees, or trees where we don't plow the planting isolated trees, or trees where we don't plow the ground over, make very much smaller holes; but mostly our trees are planted merely in plowed ground, in the loam that we have there or that we deposit there.

Q. Now, will you state what condition the woods in the Wilderness in Franklin Park are in?

A. Well, the woods in the Wilderness - it is a collection mostly of oaks grown very closely together. The saplings have sprung up and the soil is very poor and very thin. The growth is very knotty and gnarled, and while it look very picturesque, yet there is no growth there. The Wilderness is a very fine place of its kind, and merits the name, I think. It is very attractive and pleasant.

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\*Behind the present day Golf Course club house.

Q. Has there been any attempt on your part to detract from the wildness of its aspect?

A. No. I have tried to enhance it as much as possible.

Q. Is the present growth in the wilderness a product of nature?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Is it the growth which was there originally, in your opinion?

A. No, I think that most of these hills have been covered with coniferous growths.

Q. Originally?

A. Originally, yes, sir. I don't think that hard wood would naturally grow in such a soil and in such a location.

Q. You said, Mr. Pettigrew, if I remember right, that you had had trouble about cutting trees and shrubs in other places?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Just state to the committee what you meant by that?

A. In my first experience in park work in the west parks of Chicago\*, the trees had all been planted there. There was nothing but a piece of bare prairie when the parks commenced...

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\*Lincoln Park.

TESTIMONY OF SAMUEL PARSONS\*, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT AND  
FORMER SUPERINTENDENT OF CENTRAL PARK, NYC. MAY 1, 1900

Q. Are you personally familiar with the English parks?

A. I am not.

Q. Now, about those meadow spaces, Mr. Parsons, isn't it rather difficult to spoil a meadow space, when you have got it?

A. Why, it is the easiest thing in the world to spoil a meadow space when you have got it.

Q. And you think this proposed "Greeting" would have done it?

A. I think it would have injured it very much indeed.

Q. Are you at all familiar with the scheme for the Greeting?  
Do you know what they contemplated carrying out there to complete it?

A. Yes. It was to be for a concourse of carriages - a sort of effect like Rotten Row, with parallel lines of roads where people could drive back and forth, back and forth.

Q. Do you remember reading the plans at the time when they were first put in?

A. I remember reading them, looking them over, at the time.

Q. And do you know whose plan it was to have that?

A. I know they had Mr. Olmsted's plan.

Q. And do you know upon whose suggestion that feature was abandoned?

A. I do not.

Q. Now, there really isn't any fair comparison to be drawn between Central Park in New York, and Franklin Park, is there?

A. There is a fair comparison in regard to the meadows and meadow spaces.

Q. Well, from an artistic standpoint, wouldn't you have to adapt a park like Central Park, located as it is, rather differently from a park like Franklin Park?

A. Undoubtedly.

Q. And don't you think, Mr. Parsons, that where walls, boundary walls, would be necessary and would be a matter of beauty in a park like Central Park, they might be abandoned in a park like Franklin Park?

A. The principle of park-making is the same he world over, and the principle of park-making in any country place or any bit of pleasure ground is to shut it in; and you can only shut a park in satisfactorily by walls, and then mass the walls with shrubbery, in order to give the people the sense of being within an enclosed territory where the people can gather together. It is sort of a broad principle that applies to parks all over the world - in Europe, to Central Park, or to Franklin Park. It becomes more necessary in certain places.

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\*Samuel Parsons (1844-1923). Superintendent of Parks in Manhattan and the Bronx for 15 years. He was the partner of Calvert Vaux from 1880-1882. During 1882, he and Vaux worked on the construction of the wall, terraces and steps of Morningside Park which Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted first planned in 1873. F.L. Olmsted was Superintendent of New York Parks until 1878 when the office was abolished. Samuel Parsons became the next superintendent in 1885, the year the Plaza at 5th avenue and 59th street in Central Park was completed. In 1887, Vaux and Olmsted revised their Morningside Park plan which subsequently was laid out under Parsons' and Vaux's direction.

Q. Now, Central Park at the present time is practically in the heart of New York?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. All the city about it?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. You don't find such a condition to exist around Franklin Park do you?

A. I do not.

Q. There isn't a great deal of traffic to be shut out there?

A. It isn't the shutting out of the traffic that is the principal object.

Q. Well, I mean to get away from the atmosphere of the city. That is it, isn't it?

A. To get the grounds secluded. A country place, were it in the wilds, I should enclose around with plantations, to feel that I was within the plantation, and was isolated - that I was within my own domain; that it was mine, and not someone else's. It is always an agreeable feeling.

Q. Isn't that idea more in sympathy with the idea of a private park than it is with a public park?

A. No, it is in sympathy with every park that belongs to the public or that is private. It is that feeling of being within your own territory, and of being separated from other things that you are not interested in and which may not, perhaps, be agreeable to you.

Q. Isn't it a tendency among landscape gardeners or those who lay out grounds, to dispense with walls at the present time?

A. No; not among landscape gardeners, but among people who do not consider these things in the way that landscape gardeners do. Landscape gardeners are trying all over the country to urge people to enclose their parks, small and large, but in many country places there is a general idea that has grown up within a few years that places should be laid out open all along the highways, or along streets in the cities. That is not sound, from the landscape gardener's point of view, and there will be less and less of it done every year, instead of its growing. Evidences are already apparent that the fashion is passing.

Q. Well, are the landscape gardeners - that is, the foremost landscape gardeners - of this country to-day working in any sympathy of ideas along general lines?

A. They are working in sympathy of ideas, and along general lines, for the reason that within two years they have organized a national society. The members are in accord with all the general principles of their order, and that is distinct evidence of an increasing tendency to agreeing upon the general principles of landscape art.

Q. Noe, as to the Wilderness, that struck you as being just what it is called, "a wilderness"?



A. Yes; exactly.

Q. And it is not any special tribute to any landscape gardener or park commissioner that the wilderness has that wild effect, is it?

A. Not that it has the wild effect; no.

Q. About how long did it take that one tree that you spoke about to cover the space formerly occupied by four? How long did that development require?

A. (Hesitating.) I am trying to think back. I should say seven or eight years.

Q. It took about eight years?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you notice any exotic trees in our park system that seemed to be doing fairly well?

A. I noticed Norway maples.

Q. Where were they?

A. I noticed them planted along the drives in several places, and also in the lawns in Franklin Park and other parks.

Q. Did you hear we had some Norway spruces there?

A. I didn't

Q. You didn't know we had them?

A. I did not.

Q. Do you have any junipers in Central Park?

A. I don't think there is one alive left.

Q. Didn't notice any out here, did you?

A. I noticed some few there.

Q. Where was Mr. Pettigrew stationed when you met him in Chicago? Was he at that time in charge of Lincoln Park?

A. He was at that time in charge of Lincoln Park.

Q. And you have understood that he is favorably considered by all the persons interested in parks in the different cities where he has been located?

A. I understood so. I have heard a number of them testify to it.

Q. Have you heard anybody in Milwaukee testify to that fact?

A. No.

Q. You mentioned Milwaukee there.

A. I had a letter from a member of the parks - a former park commissioner - speaking very well of him; but I didn't see the man. I didn't hear him say anything. I had a letter from him.

Q. Who is that gentleman?

A. I cannot give his name now. I haven't any memorandum about it. He wrote me about a superintendent of parks.

Q. I will show you a couple of photographs, Mr. Parsons, that are in evidence here. This (handing photograph to witness) is Exhibit 98. How does that strike you? It is a photograph of one of the denuded plantations in the Fens.

A. Well -

Q. Anything beautiful about that feature?

A. It does where it comes in properly - where it is its natural place.

Q. Did you see the Parkman place before the changes were made there?

You know what I mean by the Francis Parkman place?\*

A. I have been there when Mr. Francis Parkman lived there.

Q. His place, while he lived there, was not very beautiful, in a landscape gardener's view, was it?

A. Not very. There were some beautiful trees in it.

Q. And his arrangement was rather crude?

A. I don't remember as to that.

Q. He didn't have much taste, in other words?

A. I don't remember as to that.

Q. You don't see anything that would remind you of Mr. Francis Parkman there to-day, do you?

A. I am not prepared to say that. It don't remind me of the place as I saw it.

Q. Did you see a monument there?

A. No.

Q. Did you see a place for one?

A. No.

Q. Was there any plantation that you went over in the Back Bay Fens that is worse than the others?

A. I thought the worst one that I saw was nearest to a building, or to a row of buildings.

Q. Did it strike you that that might be left as a terrible example?

A. No, that didn't strike me at all.

Q. Do you know what the original plan of the "Greeting" was?

A. Well, in a general way. I don't remember exactly. I saw it at the time. I know that it covered, or extended all across, the green in a series of straight, parallel roads.

Q. That thing has been completely changed from Professor Olmsted's plan?

A. According to my information, yes.

Q. Do you wish to criticise Professor Olmsted's opinion in that matter?

A. Oh, it is perfectly reasonable for people to differ in opinion. I certainly differ as to the advisability of that.

Q. You say it is perfectly reasonable for people to differ. I am very glad to hear you say that, because some people think that it is a crime for anyone else to disagree with them. I am very glad that you came from New York to tell us that. That is worth your coming. Now, you speak of Ellicottdale and its arrangement. Do you know that the present Park Commission had nothing to do with that, or the present adviser?

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\*In Jamaica Park; southern corner. A granite memorial by D.C. French in honor of Francis Parkman was placed on the site of the house in 1906.

A. No.

Q. That struck you as being a beautiful place?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. It is one of the most beautiful places in the parks, I think, myself.

A. Undoubtedly.

Q. Now, honestly, Mr. Parsons, do you think - in the first place, let me ask you one question; is not Central Park largely what you call a built park?

A. Yes it is.

Q. Now, if my impression or remembrance of Central Park is correct, when I first saw that, years ago, it consisted largely of tin cans and goats.

A. There may have been a time in the stage of construction when it was something like that.

Q. In other words, Central Park is an artificial park?

A. A large part of it is. The meadows are not.

Q. And you, and no other landscape architect, can come to Boston and say that Franklin Park is an artificial park in any of its parts?

A. Yes, in parts of it.

A. Yes. Every park must be more or less artificial.

Q. They are artificial now - I agree with that.

A. No park can be built without making it more or less artificial.

Q. We understand that, and that roads and such things must be artificial; but you would not compare a natural forest or a natural countryside, with its fields and meadows, and its management and its present looks, or anything of that kind, with an artificial park where they had to dump in and fill up like the Back Bay Fens? If you had compared the Fens with your Central Park, I think you would have got nearer to it, as Mr. Lundy has said. Now, I would like to ask you one question. Wasn't Mr. Lundy's question about a city park and its walls correct when he asked you and you acknowledged that the use of the wall was to shut out the city life of New York, which has surrounded the park? Weren't those walls put there to shut out the people and the city life - that is, those living around that park?

A. Yes, sir; and walls are in every case put in to shut out that life. They are always put in for that reason.

Q. Is there any comparison between the condition of Central Park and its surroundings and environments, or can there ever be, considering the condition of Franklin Park, more particularly - is there any comparison between Central Park and Franklin Park, or is there any reason for believing that Franklin Park in fifty years will be surrounded as Central Park is? Can Franklin Park, in other words, be surrounded as the Central Park is?

A. I cannot speak as to that.

Q. You know that that is a country park and that Central Park is a city park?

A. Yes; but I know that a country park needs walls as much as a city park, exactly.

Q. In other words, you belong to that school of landscape architects who are building up artificial parks, aping the English style, or the style of the English gentleman?

A. I can only show you various authorities, and I can show you a consensus of opinion in favor of the building of walls.

Q. You belong to that school?

A. I don't - because that "school" covers all landscape architects  
Q. You pretend to say that every landscape architect believes in that way of doing?

A. Very largely - all that I ever met.

Q. Well, you never met them all?

A. I don't say that I have met them all. It is impossible to do that.

Q. Do you plant large trees? You told about how you dig the big holes, etc., and so on, when you have a large tree. Do you plant many large trees?

A. I have endeavored not to plant any trees over three inches in diameter.

Q. Then, you don't plant any large trees?

A. Some.

Q. You do some?

A. Yes.

Q. But not as a rule?

A. As a rule I don't plant large trees.

Q. Do you understand what that Wilderness up in Franklin Park meant when it was named a Wilderness?

A. Well, a wild, woodland territory, as I understand it.

Q. It is a wilderness, now, is it?

A. I should say so.

Q. It is a wilderness compared with Central Park?

A. Compared to most parts of Central Park. There are portions of Central Park more wild than anything that you have in your parks.

Q. Where is that?

A. Well, if you will go to 106th streets, up on the hill where the blockhouse is, you will find native trees and the ground strewn with leaves, and as wild a territory as you wish.

Q. Well, I will go there - I am very much obliged to you for the information - the next time I go on. You think I am not correct, then, when I say that you belong to one class of architects that believes in doing just what you praise in the Boston parks?

A. I know that all the landscape architects I have ever met have held that view. I have seen a great many.

Q. Do you take out trees that are not crowding each other?

A. No, not when they are not crowding each other - unless they are dead, or something wrong with them.

Q. You went to the Arnold Arboretum to-day?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know where Thomas Motley lived there?

A. No, I do not.

Q. If you had a fine lot of exotic trees, if you found them on a farm in Central Park in New York, when that farm was bought for the Central Park, would you have cut them out?

A. It depends on what kind of exotics they were. If they were bad trees, trees that would not live, I would cut them out.

Q. I mean if they were good trees?

A. Well, if they were trees that would not live, - I would not want to take Irish junipers, no matter how well they are. I would not want to take many other things that do not thrive in this climate. I would not want to keep them at all.

Q. Isn't your idea of enclosing the parks, the seclusion idea, the English notion; isn't that distinctly an aristocratic idea?

A. No, I should not favor putting any walls such as would shut these things out altogether. I should put in walls of a reasonable height, to suggest that they are enclosed, and so that boys could not rush in, and so on: and I would put trees and shrubs along the wall in such a way that you could get a glimpse through. You should have a certain amount of view in and out, but a sense of seclusion, a sense of owning the territory that the people are walking in -

Q. You think that is a democratic notion?

A. I think that is thoroughly a democratic notion.

Q. You think that the people of the city should be willing to pay for that sort of thing?

A. I think so, distinctly. There should be a sense of not being bothered by the people outside.

Q. I suppose you have a convention of the landscape architects, or some meeting of that kind?

A. We meet frequently.

Q. Is there any discussion there?

A. Yes, frequently discussion and difference of opinion.

Q. I suppose they all agree that the same thing is right?

A. No, not by any means.

Q. That is it. I suppose that if I should happen to go to the next one that possibly I might hear some gentleman, even a most distinguished landscape authority, even criticising the Boston park management, might I not?

A. I think you would hear remarks about each other's work. Our work is brought up at each meeting, and something is said about each other, frequently criticising it.



LETTERS FROM OLMSTED, OLMSTED AND ELIOT, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Brookline, Mass., June 6, 1895.

MR. GEORGE F. CLARKE, Secretary, Boston Park Department,  
53 State street, Boston, Mass.:

DEAR SIR, - We have searched for a plan of the wall at Jamaica Pond, but find that our drawings were sent to Mr. Howe long ago. Will you, therefore, at once ask Mr. Howe to send Mr. Wheelwright a plan of the territory on which the proposed fence is to be built, indicating of course, the ends of the fence and its position on the ground. The accompanying little sunprint delineates the cross-section. The inner edge of the squared tops of the stones which will support the fence posts are, as you will see, to be set four feet from the upper edge of the coping stone of the wall. I think the theory of this office has always been that this wall was an undesirable engineering necessity, which was to be concealed as much as possible. This being the theory, we think your idea of a parapet of boulders or fragments of pudding-stone set on edge is inadmissible, because the row of stones would be more conspicuous when seen from the pond, or the further banks thereof, than a fence would be with its accompanying vines and shrubs.

Yours truly,

(Signed) Charles Eliot.  
Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot,  
Landscape Architects Advisory

Brookline, Mass., November 21, 1896.

E.C. HODGES, ESQ., Chairman of the Park Commission, Boston, Mass.:

DEAR SIR, - We understand that the landscape gardener of the Department of Parks has been asked to resign. As the older plantations of the parks stand in need of prompt revision for the sake of saving the plants intended to be permanent, as many of the newer plantations are in need of judicious thickening, and as considerable areas will be graded and ready for planting next spring, it seems important that we should have an opportunity to confer and advise with Mr. Fischer's successor at the earliest possible moment. Little can be accomplished next spring unless preparations are made soon, and it is, also, certain that no new man can possibly work intelligently unless he first has several months in which to become acquainted with the motives and designs of the several parks from the beginning. For the perfecting

of designs as ingenious and as complex as those of the Boston parks, it is essential that landscape architects, architects, engineers, superintendents and gardeners should thoroughly understand each other and work in cordial co-operation. Accordingly, we respectfully ask that we may be put in communication with Mr. Fischer's successor as soon as possible.

Yours truly,  
Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot

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(Letter to Chairman Hodges from Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot regarding increase in maintenance appropriation.)

OLMSTED, OLMSTED & ELIOT  
Landscape Architects,  
Brookline, Mass., January 4, 1897

MR. E.C. HODGES, Chairman of the Park Commission, Boston, Mass.:

DEAR SIR, - The abolition at the last meeting of the Board of the office of "Landscape Gardener" and the proposed establishment of the office of "Superintendent" marks a step in the history of the parks which we hope means greater readiness to devote money to maintenance as distinguished from construction. There has always been money for construction, but never sufficient for maintenance. Roads and walks have been extended annually and new planting has been done from time to time but the money available for maintenance has barely sufficed to keep the constantly increasing mileage of roads in good repair. It has been argued that since roads cost so much, it would be shameful to allow them to deteriorate, and so the larger part of the appropriations, for maintenance has been devoted to the roads with the results that the care of grass and shrubberies has been sadly slighted, while the original trees and woods have received little or no attention.

That this is an anomalous condition of affairs is evident. Park roads and walks are merely means of approach to scenery, so that it would seem as if such work as may be most necessary for the preservation and improvement of the living elements of scenery ought by rights to be accomplished before rather than after the construction of roads.

The "general plans" of parks contrived by our firm are always based on studies of the available scenery, and embody schemes for modifying pre-existent vegetation by clearing here and thinning there,

planting trees or shrubs and sowing grass, as well as schemes for making the resultant scenery agreeably accessible by roads. The vital element in a park design is indeed its suggestions concerning vegetation. It is only necessary to imagine a park without grass, bushes or trees to realize that this is the case. The road lines of parks are chosen with reference to the scenery designed to be secured by modifications of the vegetation, and conversely, the programme of work on the vegetation is devised with reference to the positions chosen for the roads and other points of view. Thus the "general plan" of a park is not a road plan only and it is not a planting plan, or a scheme for the treatment of old trees or roads. It is a closely related and logically combined design, requiring for its realization on the ground faithful work in all these different departments alike.

It follows that whatever work may be required for the complete realization of a "general plan," whether it be work of axe or pruning hook, plough, spade or steam-roller, may properly be charged to construction. The contrary assumption that while roads may be charged to construction, work in the pre-existent woods and all thinning of plantations after they are two years planted must be charged to maintenance, has naturally resulted in a partial lopsided development of the Boston parks, by no means representing the intents and designs of the designers. Roads and walks have been thoroughly well built in accordance with the general plans, but the vegetation is not in all details what it was designed to be, because it has not been properly thinned and re-adjusted from time to time. Much desirable treatment of the original woods has also been too long postponed. We would recommend that a much larger part of the money available for construction should henceforth be devoted to the woods and plantations.

Assuming, for a moment, that this reform can be accomplished, permit us to briefly mention some of the more pressing items of work to be done. We will assume that the Superintendent will have full charge of all the work of maintenance, including road repairs and watering, the care of buildings, of finished lawns, shrubberies and groves, and so on, that the engineering department will continue to direct works of engineering construction in accordance with the general plans of the landscape architect, and that a specialist will be engaged to direct planting, the tinning of planting and woodmen's work in accordance with the same general plans.

After acquainting himself thoroughly with the intentions embodied in the general plans, the latter officer ought to attend first to the rescue and re-adjustment of the plantations of the Fens. These

plantations were rightly planted very thickly, both for immediate effect and because of the exposure of the place to the winds. Viewed from the water and from many of the paths the resulting effects are generally pleasing, but radical thinning has for some time been needed for the encouragement of the longlived and finer sorts of trees and plants which are choked by the quick-growing species of less permanent value. In addition, there are a few small areas such as the triangle at the O'Reilly monument and the spaces near Westland avenue which, owing to changed circumstances, need to be thoroughly revised.

Throughout the parks, beyond the Fens, there is more or less old growth which needs to be removed or helped, as the case may be, and there is much half-finished and more as yet unattempted new planting which will call for close and faithful following of the intentions of the park designers. For accomplishing the new planting large stocks of suitable species of trees and shrubs will need to be collected and propagated, - much larger stocks of the more useful native sorts than Mr. Fischer, with his leanings towards garden varieties, could be persuaded to gather and use. It was precisely because of Mr. Fischer's increasing inability to keep in mind the character of the simpler planting required by the designs that we felt obliged some months ago to call the attention of the Board to the matter. Fortunately there is little of his recent work which cannot be easily recast to accord with the spirit of the plans, and we may add that if work in the original woods can now be taken up intelligently, no one need much regret that it has been so long postponed. It is obvious that the work to be done cannot safely be intrusted to a horticulturist or a gardener, nor can it be left to an arboriculturist or forester. Good gardeners cannot avoid working for the perfecting of individual plants - work which is right in a garden, but wrong in a park where the general effect or landscape is of first importance. Good foresters cannot avoid working for the development of individual trees - work which is right where a crop of timber is desired, or where specimens are to be trained up, as in an arboretum, but wrong in a park, where groups, masses and dense woods are more important in the landscape than single trees. The planter to be appointed to carry out the designed effect in the landscape should have as much knowledge of trees and shrubs as possible, but should be young enough to learn by study and experience to appreciate the various kinds of landscape effects designed to be secured. We have found that young men who have had experience in nurseries, provided they have sufficient intelligence to shake off the nurseryman's love of plants as novelties and curiosities, are far better fitted to manage planting than gardeners. Such a man is Mr. Hans J. Koehler, whom we have recommended to the Board for the position of "planter"....

(Letter from Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot to Superintendent Pettigrew regarding general planting.)

Brookline, Mass., February 24, 1897

MR. J.A. PETTIGREW, Superintendent of Parks, Franklin Park, Boston, Mass.:

DEAR SIR, - We are particularly desirous that there should be no Rhododendrons or Kalmias (or other broad-leaved evergreens commonly found native in the vicinity of mountain brooks), in the Back Bay Fens.

A very large number of both Rhododendrons and Kalmias can be appropriately and advantageously planted in the brook section of Leverett Park, particularly to screen one of the longitudinal walks from the other, especially where the ground is almost free of trees between the woods covering Nickerson Hill and the groves in the vicinity of Willow Pond. Some planting has been done at this point which is directly contrary to our orders, and we should be glad to have you revise it, with a view to obtaining a permanent evergreen screen between the two walks, composed mostly of plants which will not grow more than 10 or 15 feet high.

The steep bank around the south side of Ward's Pond could very appropriately be covered with Kalmias and Rhododendrons, with pines and hemlocks higher up on the bank.

With a view to preventing misunderstandings as to what should and what should not be planted in the various parks and in special localities in each park in carrying out our general designs, it would be well for you to submit to us lists of the plants you would propose to use in such cases. The sooner this can be done, the more time we will have for giving the matter proper consideration. We would suggest that Mr. Koehler be set to work on these planting lists at once, and that he in each case indicate what plants are already growing in the park or locality under consideration.

As Mr. Koehler is new to the work, we will indicate briefly the general character of the design of each of the parks as far as concerns the plantations.

#### BACK BAY FENS.

The predominant character of the vegetation is intended to resemble that of many of the tidal estuaries along the Massachusetts coast where, to a great extent, they have been left to nature. The ground subject to be overflowed at almost every tide will, of course, have vegetation adapted to that particular condition. The banks above, when high, are supposed



to be of a rather dry, gravelly nature, and were in fact actually filled with dry gravel, although this gravel is covered with black salt muck and a deep layer of top-soil, affording conditions very much less unfavorable to the growth of plants than would be met with on natural gravel banks. For the sake of variety, therefore, it would be possible to plant some of the banks on the assumption that they were of a more clayey nature, resembling, in condition for plant growth, the so-called binding gravel. The existing plantations may serve as a guide to determine where one or the other of these styles of planting should be adopted. The most important general rule for planting the Fens is, that nowhere shall there be any turf except in the distinctly artificial planting strip along the drives. In many places shrubbery has been planted where it is intended to have views which is of a nature to grow to tall. This should now be extensively removed and much lower-growing sorts of shrubs substituted. As a general rule, we would prefer to greatly reduce the number of exotic trees in the Fens, though we have no objection to the extensive use of such foreign shrubs and perennials as may reasonably be supposed to have escaped from cultivation from surrounding gardens. This, however has already been done to an excessive extent, and in remodeling plantations it would be best to use merely native shrubs, vines and perennials. For instance, where the banks are so often gravelly extensive stretches of Myrica and Sweet Fern would tend to increase the effect of naturalness in the locality. We would especially advise the omission of waterside shrubs in the Fens, which could be more appropriately used in the Riverway; such, for instance, would be the Adler, Elder, Cephalantus, Willows, etc. On the other hand, Baccharis, Beach Plum, Rosa lucida, Myrica and Sweet Fern, being often found growing luxuriantly along our storm-swept coasts, should be used freely in the Fens and should be excluded from the Riverway, even though they might grow better in the latter locality. We should prefer to have the Red, Scarlet and Black Oak, Gray Birch and Nyssa give the predominant character to the banks of the Fens, and to not use and to eliminate all those trees which grow in swamps or along fresh water streams in such numbers as to be characteristic.

#### RIVERWAY.

On the Riverway, especially on the banks near the water, we should prefer to have the Scarlet Maple, Silver Maple, White Oak, White Swamp Oak, Willow, Black and Canoe Birch, Hornbeam, Beech, etc., give the predominant character.

In general, the Boston side of the Riverway should be planted with the same kinds of shrubs, creepers, etc., as the Brookline side, though as there is generally considerably more room, it would be well to have

a somewhat marked difference in the borders near the driveway. For instance, it may happen that *Rosa wichuraiana* was not used on the Brookline side; it would, therefore, not be desirable to have much of it near the river, but it might be used on the banks near the drive, where there is considerable space between the drive and the bridle-path. As in the case of the FEns, and in fact except where the character of the local scenery is intended to be very markedly wild and unsophisticated, we do not consider that there is any objection to using introduced plants to a moderate extent especially shrubs and creepers, on the theory that the ground has been more or less under the influence of human action, and that plants may have escaped from cultivation from the surrounding gardens. This remark need not be repeated, as it applies to all the parks, the exception being as we have said, particularly wild localities like Hemlock Hill in the Arboretum, and the Wilderness in Franklin Park. But we should prefer to have extremely few foreign trees used where these differ perceptibly to the eye of the ordinarily intelligent observer from thenative trees of the same genus. The use of foreign coniferous plants should be especially avoided. Spruces, even the native ones are so extremely rare as wildlings in and about Boston as to look decidedly unnatural, and their use should, therefore, be avoided where a natural effect is intended to prevail.

#### LEVERETT PARK.

So far as Leverett Park is concerned the character of the planting should closely resemble that of the Riverway. On the Boston side the land rises to such a height that a marked difference in the character of the vegetation from that along the pond is desirable. The Red Cedar and Gray Birch would be useful in distinguishing these plantations. The varieties of Oaks common in the woods of the vicinity should be used freely, while the Maples would better not be used much. From Willow Pond to Perkins street the greater part of the land has been designed to be used as a fresh water natural history garden, and the character of the plantations can, therefore, be more gardenlike than would usually be desirable elsewhere in the parks. For this reason, we would admit of the use of *Rhododendrons*, *Kalmias*, *Andromedas*, *Retinosporus* and handsome flowering shrubbery, except along the margin of Willow Pond and the brook, where the planting should be kept as natural as possible and should agree with that on the Brookline side. The face of Nickerson Hill towards Brookline should also be thickened up with an undergrowth of native shrubs and creepers.

#### JAMAICA PARK.

The portion of the park known as Pine Banks, being a gravelly deposit and having attached to it the distinguishing name, would better have a large number of pines planted upon it, both to succeed those which are dying and to occupy

the ground wherever there is an opportunity among other trees. Some of the Norway Spruces should be cut out and Pines may be planted in place of them. The margin for plantation along the northwest side of the pond is so narrow that, with a view to screening future houses out, it would be desirable to plant Pines and Hemlocks, mingled with such deciduous trees as will form the best permanent screen, such as Hop-hornbeam, Beech, Maple and Basswood, supplemented by shrubbery which will endure dense shade. The wild seedlings of Elm and rather open growing trees should be removed, as they will tend to destroy the screen to be formed by the more compact and slower growing trees and bushes. The occasional margins of planting ground between the shroe walk and the water wil eventually be inevitably much occupied by people desiring to sit in the shade near the water. Comparatively few bushes can, therefore, be planted with a view to remaining permanently in these particular situations. On the other hand the surface would better be covered with turf, and in order to maintain turf in these particular cases it would be best to plant trees which will not shade the ground too densely, and the lower branches on the side away from the water would better be pruned off from time to time, so as not shade out the border plantations on the other side of the walk. The southwest side of the pond already has a very charming Beech grove at one point, but it would be desirable to extend this grove as far as practicable all along Prince street side of the pond. The southeast side of the pond needs to have shrubbery on all the groud between the bridle path and the driveway, low at a few points where the views should be kept open under the branches of the trees from the driveway, and higher elsewhere to break the view of houses, carriages, etc., from the water. On the steep banks about the bathing pools strong, low-growing, prickly shrubs should be planted to form an impenetrable screen. At the top of the bank it would be well to have more or less evergreens, Red Cedar, Dwarf Pine and the like. It not being intended to keep the view of the Pond open from the drive at this particular point, a considerable number of shade trees would best be planted in the vicinity of the drive, but far enough from the bank not to eventually ruin the bank plantation. Every effort should be made to completely cover the wall and fence between the bathing pool and the proposed boating sheter at the end of Pond street. We would suggest that Matrimony Vine, Forsythia suspense and clambering roses can be more freely used on this wall, and also on top of all the walls near the bathing pools. All the steep banks around the northeast side of the pond should be covered with a dense and usually low growth of bushes. The selection need not be restricted to native kinds, but a natural effect should predominate. In dense shade, for instance, there would be no objection to using Vinca minor, as it is almost the only thing which will completely cover the ground under such circumstances. Where practicable, we would prefer to hae the ground covered with Rosa lucida, Myrica, Sweet Fern, Hypericum and the smaller-growing Viburnums. The upper part of the bank along Prince street should be planted with shade-enduring trees and shrubs, such as Hemlock and Viburnum, in order to produce a screen which will eventulaly hide out houses which will undoubtedly be built along this road in the future. Clumps of large growing willows can be planted in the beach at projecting points.

## FRANKLIN PARK.

The main thing which we want to most strongly impress upon you with regard to Franklin Park is, that it is the express intention of the design that there should be a marked difference between the portion of the park south of Glen lane, known as the Country Park, and the portion north of Glen lane, which has been assigned to various purposes, involving a more artificial and gardenlike style of improvements and planting. In the Country Park we would wish that all intelligent persons should be impressed with the ideal above all of its rurality. Therefore, except in immediate connection with the necessary buildings, all of which are intended to be designed in a very rustic and rural style, and where a limited amount of garden vines, shrubs and plants would be appropriate, as expressing human occupation, the list of trees, shrubs and plants should be carefully restricted to those which are native in this region, and appropriate to the local conditions, supplemented by a few which so closely resemble the natives as not to be distinguishable by the ordinary observer and which have some marked advantage justifying their use, such as the common Barberry and Privet, European Hornbeam, European Prostrate Juniper, Japanese Ampelopsis, Rosa multiflora, European Alder, European Willow Tree, and a number of American trees and shrubs which are not native in this locality, but would not look out of place. We have, unfortunately, not hitherto been entirely successful in securing the execution of this element of the design, and we look to you to remedy the errors which have been made in this respect in the past. Such a revision of the planting which has already been done in the Wilderness is of pressing importance. The revision of the border plantations is not of such vital importance. It may be done gradually from time to time. It would take too long to describe the particular kind of planting appropriate to each different locality in the Country Park, and we shall expect to discuss these matters with you from time to time on the ground.

We wish to say, however, that we were chiefly anxious as to the proper treatment of the Wilderness. In the matter of thinning trees, for instance, the ordinary purpose of a superintendent of the park is to secure a healthy, vigorous and more or less symmetrical growth of each individual tree, and to this end it is usual to thin them out from time to time, just as one would seedling vegetables in a garden. The result ordinarily is that by the time the Oaks and other forest trees have attained their full development they are seldom closer together than 15 or 20 feet to 50 feet or more, producing a certain dignified monotony in a wood, each tree being notable as an example of the forest tree. In many parts of the park, more particularly wherever the soil is deep enough and good enough to support a growth of turf under the trees so that the whole surface can be rambled over freely, this treatment is unquestionably desirable, especially as affording the greatest possible accommodation to the public in using the park, but in the Wilderness we particularly desire that nothing of this effect should be attempted, except perhaps where the trees are growing in good soil and then only in limited areas of a few square yards each, in order to facilitate picnicking. In general, this woodland is so



full of rocks and ledges, so irregular and the trees in it already so crowded, that the effect aimed at should be that of a much wilder, even almost neglected looking wood. Trees may now and then be allowed to stand that are very close together, even growing almost on the same spot, and weak trees that are overtopped by others should be left instead of being thinned out, as would elsewhere be desirable. Large numbers of young seedling trees should be left to struggle as best they may in the shade of the other trees, being given, however, sufficient light so that they will not utterly perish, and so that they will be ready to take the place of the larger trees as these die or are blown down. The character of the undergrowth should be precisely that to be found in unpastured woodland in Eastern Massachusetts, and all foreign plants should be excluded. The leaves should not be raked up and dead and dying branches should not be pruned from the trees to such an extent as would be desirable, or as is customary in ordinary park woods. On all northern slopes the evergreen rock-fern should be introduced in great numbers. Along walks and in places where they would be seen, we should be glad, if it is practicable, to have the Mayflower (Trailing Arbutus), Bearberry, Partridge-berry, and other low evergreen plants added. The border plantations along Canterbury street ought to be very much wider and should have more Hemlocks and shade-enduring shrubbery added. The open land should, in general, stop short of the circuit drive, allowing views from this drive to be obtained under the branches of trees. We should prefer to have the Red and White Oaks used in ten times larger quantities than any other kinds.

These portions of the park north of Glen lane are all intended to be lighted at night and to be treated in every way more like city parks while the Country Park should be shut up at as early an hour in the evening as practicable on account of the difficulty of properly policing it in the absence of lights, and the inappropriateness and artificiality of lights where a thoroughly rural effect is intended.

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(Letter from Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot, to Superintendent Pettigrew regarding Planting Plans.)

Brookline, Mass.: , March 15, 1897

MR. J.A. PETTIGREW, Superintendent of Parks, Franklin Park, Jamaica Plain, Mass.:

DEAR SIR, - It will hardly be necessary to furnish you with planting plans, except in special cases where we may think it desirable, but as



your planting assistant is new to the work, we thought it best to send you an outline planting plan for the border plantation in Franklin Park from the Refectory to the intersection of Canterbury street with Blue Hill avenue. This plan, with the accompanying list, will serve as a typical example of the sort of border plantations that we regard as desirable, especially where the width is restricted as in this case.

The principal points of design are as follows: (1st.) The plantation to be formed almost exclusively of plants native to this region, supplemented by a few foreign plants, if necessary for practical reasons, which are hardly to be distinguished by an ordinary observer from native plants. (2d.) Ample allowance should be made for the spread of trees, so that when they are 30 or 40 years old, they will not become so crowded as to lose their lower branches to any considerable extent; the selection of trees also to be made of such kinds as are most tenacious of their lower branches when crowding each other. The use of these trees in a special plantation of this sort we regard as entirely unnecessary and objectionable if the ground is thickly planted with good-sized shrubbery. It is not a case of forest planting, but of an informal, picturesque, hedge-like plantation of trees and bushes, where every precaution should be taken to prevent the trees growing with tall, naked stems, and to encourage to the utmost a dense undergrowth. (3rd.) The border screen at this point being narrow and the circuit drive unusually near the border street, it is more than usually important to have a large proportion of evergreen trees, in order that the screen may be as nearly complete as possible when the foliage is off the deciduous trees. For the exterior faces of the plantation White Pine can be used for this purpose, but in moderate quantities only, so as its dense shade would tend to destroy the desirable undergrowth. In the interior of the plantation the Hemlock is the best evergreen to be used, as it retains its foliage when crowded by other trees better than any other available evergreen tree.

We think the trees ought not to be planted in any case less than 10 feet apart, and would better average 20 feet. Both Pines and Hemlocks should be grouped to some extent, so as not to appear like an artificial uniform mixture of deciduous and evergreen trees.

(4th.) It is an essential characteristic of border plantations as we design them, that they should be faced or bottomed out with small-growing trees, tall, densely twigged shrubs, which would gradually merge into low bushes along the outside edge of the plantation. The trees are merely used as the tall part of the screen in the landscape,

but as they grow old, they are almost useless as a screen to a person standing on the ground near the border plantations unless supplemented by shrubbery.

Partly to assist in the screen, but more especially to make the plantation appear more natural and to hide the bare earth somewhat in winter, the ground under the trees should be covered by shade-enduring bushes, which would also serve to some extent as a shelter for the trunks and roots of the trees while they are young.

The accompanying lists are suggestive merely, and may be varied from, provided the intended effect is equally well secured by other plants. The plants are in no case intended to be equally mixed within the limits of the different areas assigned to them. It is very desirable to use prickly, compact-growing shrubs on the outer side of the plantation, next the street, in order to make intrusion less frequent.

There is ample opportunity, while following our plan in its main outlines and characteristics, for the use of original thought and study in the plantation with a view to making it natural and appropriate to the topographical conditions, as well as varied and interesting in appearance. The low ground, for instance, at the base of the border plantation near Canterbury street, affords a rare opportunity for the use of a class of plants which require moist ground for vigorous growth; again, instead of having turf in the low ground, we should be pleased to see meadow ferns in open swamp bushes, like Clethra. The effect, intended by the irregular topography at this point could best be attained, however, by covering the ground with a lower growth than Clethra in general.

The entrance path indicated on the plan\* was not on the original plan of Franklin Park, but the continual use of the adjoining spring by neighbors seems to make it necessary. We would strenuously object to the introduction of a carriage entrance, however, as this would involve an additional policeman, besides exposing the street and houses to view from the circuit road.

The use of the perennials suggested in the earth-filled crevices of the pergola or boulder wall\*\* is to some extent a temporary improvement. No doubt the greater part of them will eventually be smothered by the vines, which can best be relied upon for the permanent effect; yet such perennials as remain will tend to give an interest and a wildness which there would not be otherwise.

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\*At Blue Hill Avenue and present day American Legion Highway.

Entrance built in 1908.

\*\* At the Refectory.

You are, of course, perfectly familiar with most of our suggestions and ideas, and they are not intended as instructions, or written on the supposition that you could not do the planting without them. We write on the assumption that we are the responsible designers of the park, and that it is rightly proper that you should be acquainted with our ideas on the subject, even though they may accord entirely with our own, as you will thus be assured that whatever you do in carrying out our plans will be likely to meet with our approval. Should you, on the other hand, deem any of our ideas impracticable, we should, of course, be glad to discuss them with you. As we have said in the beginning, we trust that the plan and these suggestions will assist you in conveying our ideas as to design and planting to Mr. Koehler.

It, of course, makes little difference to us how new plantations in the parks are made, that is, whether they are planted entirely by the eye, or after the preparation of more or less comprehensive and detailed plans and lists, provided the result of the planting accords with our general ideas. If we had executive charge of planting we should prefer to have plans and lists, in order to be able to lay out the work in advance, and so save the time which would otherwise be needed during the rush of the planting season for studying and making up requisitions in the park nursery.

Yours truly,

OLMSTED, OLMSTED & ELIOT.

EXERPTS FROM THE CLOSING REMARKS OF PARKS DEPARTMENT COUNSEL,  
NATHAN MATTHEWS, MAY 18, 1900

...I will close this part of my argument Mr. Chairman by referring to the annual reports of the Department. There is no other city in this country, there is none in the world that I am acquainted with, which publishes so many documents for the information of the public as the City of Boston; and there is no department of our City Government which publishes better and more comprehensive annual reports than the Park Department. If people would read these reports before writing to the papers or before instigating public investigations, the newspapers would not contain so much criticism of the Department, and there would have been no demand for this investigation.

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There remain to be considered, Mr. Chairman, the charges against the Commissioners, their advisers and subordinates, that relate to the scenery for the parks. What I have said so far relates to the charges against the Commissioners, founded upon alleged violations of sound principles in the administration of the business of the department. These charges have all been shown to be either unfounded in fact or trivial in importance; but the criticism that remains, while equally unfounded, is by no means unimportant, and relates to a matter which is of the greatest consequence to the people of this city. This committee can, in the opinion of the Commissioners, perform a great public service by an intelligent and careful decision as to whether the general theory of landscape work followed out by the Commissioners and their predecessors in office, under the advice of Messrs. Olmsted and Sargent, has been wise or not, and as to what policy should be pursued in the future in this regard.

It is said, in the first place, that there have been many changes in Mr. Olmsted's work.

This charge seems to be based upon an entire misapprehension of the facts.

There have been just five changes in Mr. Olmsted's completed work. These are (1) in the fish ponds and connecting streams and walks in Leverett Park; (2) in the wall at Jamaica Pond; (3) in the parapet at the Funeral bridge; (4) in the valley gates; and (5) in the wall on Glen road.

Let us see what the reasons for these changes were.

At Leverett Park several small ponds were filled up and walks abolished. Anyone would suppose, Mr. Chairman, from the oral evidence in this case, that those ponds and walks were part of Mr. Olmsted's original plans. But they were not. Mr. Olmsted is not responsible for them. They were not a part of his original plan for the development of Leverett Park. You can see that by referring to the plans submitted by him in the annual reports of the department for the years 1880, 1881 and 1886, none of which show any pools or walks such as were subsequently built in that park. These ponds were introduced - as any of the critics of the Department might have found out, if they had taken the trouble to ask the Commissioners or to search the annual reports - at the instance and for the benefit of the Natural History Society in order to enable it to maintain a fresh water aquarium. You will find the whole matter set forth in detail in the report for 1887, on pp. 33 to 44. It was not until 1889 that Mr. Olmsted prepared the plan contained in the report for that year, showing these pools and walks. You will find the subject also referred to in the report for 1897-98, page 14, and in the report for 1899-1900, page 9.

Now, after these ponds or pools were built and these walks constructed, unfortunately, and much to the surprise of the city officials who had been responsible for the work - of whom I was one myself - the Natural History people gave the whole plan up. They had been unable to raise the money, and the whole scheme had to be abandoned. Thereupon the ponds became absolutely meaningless. There were ten little pools to be used as fresh water aquaria for fish, but there were no fish in them, and there was no money to procure fish, or to keep the fish alive, if anybody furnished them. And yet there they were? Ten pools, eight feet deep, with steep banks, dangerous to the women and children for whom the parks of Boston were largely intended, and serving literally no useful human purpose. No wonder that the Olmsteds in the annual report for 1894-5, at page 74, speak of these pools and paths as a "by no means self-explanatory arrangement."

But that was not all. The pools on the north side of the hill were filled with water; but the three pools on the other side of the hill, between it and Jamaica Pond, were dry during most of the year. There had been some change in the water levels, which had rendered it impossible to maintain water in these pools. The same statement applies to the outlet stream of Ward's Pond, which was intended to feed these pools. It was a very pretty stream; it had a very ingeniously constructed cascade, built of rustic rockwork; and there was a nice walk over this cascade, in the form of a bridge. It was a very nice stream, Mr. Chairman; but it had no water in it. It was a great success as a stone and gravel channel; but as a water course it was a failure. Exhibit 126, a photograph, shows what a blot on the landscape this stream was when, as was generally the case, it was without water. You can readily understand that many persons agreed with Mr. Winslow, who came here to criticise the Commissioners for building these pools, that they were "unsightly puddles," and should be filled up.



If you can charge anybody with the responsibility for this failure of water, it would be the engineers, who, perhaps, ought to have known more about the water levels; but, it is difficult to hold the Commissioners of 1894 who built the pools or Mr. Olmsted who designed them responsible; and more difficult still to find fault with the present Commissioners for having corrected the mistake.

The condition of this part of Leverett Park in 1898 was, therefore, that there were ten pools, intended solely for fish with no water in three of them, and no fish in any of them; and there was a stream, intended to spill over a cascade, which was dry for nine months in the year. And yet people have come to this hearing and have complained of the Commissioners for undoing the "artistic" and "natural" work of Mr. Olmsted in forming these ponds, cascade and bridge! People, very likely these same critics, thought differently when the pools were built. I have already referred to public opinion on this subject as voiced by Mr. Winslow. For further evidence I might quote from the columns of the Daily Transcript in 1893 or 1894, where you will find article after article, written in the usual violent language of objectors to park work, concerning the artificial features which were being introduced into Leverett Park - and the removal of which is now denounced as an unwarranted interference with Mr. Olmsted's plans. The cascade and bridge, so favorably spoken of by some of the witnesses in this case, was then referred to as "a stiff, artificial cascade, under a heavy stone bridge that would carry a freight train."

As I have said, not only were these features objected to by the public at the time, but they ceased to have any utility or meaning, because of the abandonment of the scheme of the Natural History Society for fresh water aquaria, and because of the unexpected deficiency of water. What was there to do with them? Nothing, of course, but to fill them up; and this has been done.

Then, we have an equally unreasonable lament over the destruction of an expensive wall said to have been built by Mr. Olmsted for the beautification of Jamaica Pond. He, or rather his partner, Mr. Eliot, called it a "disagreeable engineering necessity, to be concealed as much as possible." You will find that statement in a letter to the Park Department, under date of June 6, 1895, Exhibit 131\*. Then if you will look in the annual report for 1894-95, you will see on page 74 that the intention of the Olmsteds was that the wall should rise only eighteen inches above the water. This wall was not built to beautify the pond. It was put there because, in Mr. Olmsted's opinion, based upon his experience with park work elsewhere, it was necessary to have border walls around the pond to accommodate the great crowds of people who would come there, and because he thought the pond at that place was too deep for an ordinary gravel beach and walk. Consequently, a stone wall or slope was built.

When this wall was built it was objected to by everybody in the neighborhood. If you will refer to the daily papers of the period, you will find that it was denounced as a "dreadful, glaring bulwark of Quincy granite, a dam, fit to be spelled with an 'n,' big and strong enough to hold the ocean." Strong language was also used in referring to the "stupid artificial walk," which was said to "completely obliterate the natural beauty of the pond."

But that was not the end of it. That was what people thought when the wall was first constructed; but after it had been there a year or two and it was found that the waterlevel, changing there as well as at Ward's Pond, was generally five to eight feet below the upper edge of the wall, instead of one foot and one-half, as originally intended, public opposition to the wall intensified, and everybody in the community who saw the pond wanted something done with the wall. This opinion was also shared by the landscape architects, as appears from the instructions of the Olmsteds to Mr. Pettigrew, under date of February 24, 1897, that "every effort should be made to completely cover the wall."

Mr. Pettigrew has explained to you that the changes he made in the wall were slight and inexpensive. See also the annual reports for 1897-8, page 14, and for 1899-1900, pages 7 and 20. He simply took off the top course and made a planting space or slope between it and the water. This loam-slope he also carried around that part of the pond where Mr. Olmsted's walk had been built, between the walk and the water; thus diminishing very much the artificial appearance given to the pond by the unforeseen exposure of several feet of gravel bank and wall. The only objection that anybody can fairly make to this change is that it was not done sooner.

We then have a parapet at Funeral Bridge which was altered; - a very slight change, and a good reason for it, as explained by Mr. Pettigrew and Mr. Sargent.

The Valley Gates, separating the Country Park from the Playstead in Franklin Park were taken away because they were found to be dangerous.

Then the wall in Glen Lane, which according to Mr. Dole was "a scar on the bosom of Venus," and had apparently been thus regarded by the people from the time it was first built, was taken down.

That is all there is in this hue and cry about changes in Mr. Olmsted's work. There is, in all human probability, not one of them that Mr. Olmsted would not have approved himself if he had been where his opinion could have been asked.

That is all there is to this branch of the case, except the cost of these changes. Witnesses have said that it was an outrage for the Park Commissioners to undo completed work because of the enormous expense

to the taxpayers of Boston. Did any of them try to find out what these changes had really cost? They could easily have ascertained the facts; but none of them tried to do so, because none of them desire information. To use their own language, they "have simply come here to criticise."

And what did they cost? The committee found it out without difficulty. The amount was \$10,660 for all the changes put together - \$9,900 for the changes at Leverett Park, and \$760 for the changes at Jamaica Pond. I take it that the \$760 does not include the walk, but only the change in the wall, -- which was all that was objected to. The changes in the Valley Gates, at the Funeral Bridge, and in the wall at Glen Lane, cost the city nothing. You will find the information upon these matters on pages 1329 and 1331 of the evidence.

So much for the changes in Mr. Olmsted's completed work.

There has been one change made in his uncompleted work; and that was in the "Greeting," which was shown on his plans for Franklin Park, and which was intended to be a sort of concourse, something like Rotten Row in Hyde Park, London. The Greeting had been built, to the extent of stripping the loam; but was left in that condition for many years. It was discontinued by the present Commissioners upon the advice of their landscape adviser, and has been replaced by a glade covered with turf, upon portions of which trees have been planted. This change was made for two reasons. In the first place there was the cost - \$175,000 to \$200,000. In the next place it was felt that enough had been done for the carriage people. Thirty-four miles of drives had been projected for our park system, and twenty-five of them had been built. It seemed to Mr. Sargent and the Commissioners that enough had been done for those who go to the parks in carriages or on horseback, and that it was not necessary to spend \$200,000 more of the public money to make a Rotten Row in Franklin Park, for the sole benefit of those who ride and drive. It was thought that it would be more in the interest of the general masses of the people if that plan were abandoned and the place converted into a pleasant meadow such as you now find there. The cost, I believe, was about \$15,000. If you wish to see what was said in the annual reports on the subject of the abandonment of the Greeting, you can refer to the Report for 1897-8, p. 12, and to that for 1898-9, p. 7.

Here again, Mr. Chairman - and I ought to have mentioned this fact when I was discussing the changes at Leverett Park and Jamaica Pond - all these changes, the filling of the pools, the changes in the walks at Jamaica Pond and the abolition of the Greeting, were specified in the estimates of December 30, 1897, and ratified, as I have already explained, by the Mayor and City Council. All these questions were *res adjudicata* two years ago, and they would only have been raised at this late day by persons ignorant of the facts and intolerant of information. The time to object was in 1898 when the City Council was asked to appropriate \$50,000

and to authorize the Mayor to petition the Legislature for another million dollars to complete the park system according to the revised estimates of the Commissioners, with these changes specifically noted.

Before passing from this part of the case I ought, perhaps, refer to the absurd attempt that has been made to have it appear that there has been some conflict between the ideas of Mr. Olmsted and those of Mr. Sargent with reference to the completion of the Boston parks. What Mr. Sargent thinks of Mr. Olmsted and his work you can gather from his testimony in this case, for he attributed to Mr. Olmsted the entire credit for what he called, upon the whole, the best park system in the world. You can also refer to the dedication to Mr. Olmsted by Professor Sargent of one of the volumes of his work on the Silva of North America. What Mr. Olmsted thought of Professor Sargent is also apparent from the evidence in this case. Frequent quotations from Professor Sargent are to be found in Mr. Olmsted's reports to the Park Commissioners. See the annual reports for 1879, 1885, 1886, and other years; Mr. Olmsted constantly sought Mr. Sargent's advice concerning his work in Boston, in New York, and for the World's Fair; and they co-operated on other occasions. The whole attempt to have it appear that there was any antagonism or could be any antagonism between them, is simply on a par with the rest of the criticism in this case. They were the first authorities in the country on the subject of park scenery; and there is no evidence of any difference of opinion respecting the parks in Boston, Brookline or elsewhere.

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Having failed to show that there were any changes in Mr. Olmsted's work that amounted to much, or which cost much; having failed to justify the criticism as to the abandonment of the Greeting, with its saving to the city of nearly \$175,000; our half dozen critics fall back upon alleged inappropriate alterations by these Commissioners in the alleged "natural scenery" of the parks. This has been the main burden of their complaint, probably because very vague, and therefore safer than objections to specific things; but they were not allowed to hide behind this general objection to the work of the past three years. It is the function of cross-examination to find out what is really in the minds and hearts of the witnesses; and on cross-examination it appeared that the things these witnesses objected to in particular were these - and I ask your attentive consideration to this list, because it embraces every single thing relating to scenery that any critic of the Park Department who has testified in this case objects to, - except tree culture, which I will consider by itself. They objected to the roads in the wilderness in Franklin Park, to the waterworks in Franklin Park, to the wall in Glen Lane, to the Refectory, to the stone steps in Franklin Park going up to Hagborne Hill, to the wall and walk at Jamaica Pond, to the pools and waterless brook in Leverett Park, to the Cascade bridge, to the presence of exotic trees and shrubs in the parks, to the boundary walls and plantations, and to the removal of trees in order to obtain landscape effects.



That, Mr. Chairman, is a complete list of the alleged violations of nature committee by these Commissioners; but every one of those things was either begun or done by the predecessors in office of the present Commissioners; under the guidance, advice and plans of Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted. The only exception that I ought to make to that statement is with reference to the boundary walls. These were not even begun in Mr. Olmsted's time; but they constitute a part of his original plans, as will be seen by a reference to his notes on Franklin Park, page 64. You are here to investigate the conduct of the Department since Mr. Olmsted left it and the wisdom of the advice rendered by his successor, and all you can find in the way of criticism is some dozen or twenty charges, every one of which applies - not to the present Commissioners or to Mr. Sargent, but to prior Commissioners and Mr. Olmsted! That is quite characteristic of this case. In this branch of it, as elsewhere, the things complained of were done by somebody else.

I do not propose to take up the time of the committee in considering whether any of the features which I have just enumerated as objected to were really objectionable from the standpoint of good landscape art, or not. It is in evidence, kindly furnished by Mr. Dole, that objection was made to many of these things, particularly the Funeral bridge, the Refectory, and the walks and wall at Jamaica Park, etc., by prominent citizens and by the Mayor at the time they were done; but it was not for us to set up our judgment against Mr. Olmsted's. He probably knew better than we did. Even supposing that he did make mistakes, and that there are too many stone steps in Franklin Park; suppose this wall in Glen Lane was in truth a "scar upon the breast of Venus;" suppose there was too much walk and wall at Jamaica Pond; - what of it all in comparison with the great and admitted value of Mr. Olmsted's work? What does it all amount to, gentlemen? Three or four errors of judgment in a great work costing over thirteen million dollars!

Other people made mistakes besides Mr. Olmsted. There are some ugly buildings in the parks; there are some ugly bridges - one, at least, if not more. The architects were responsible - not Mr. Olmsted. Too much money was spent for water works in Franklin Park. The engineers were to blame for that. And if you find exotic shrubs scattered through the wilderness and other parts of Franklin Park you ought not to attribute the blame to Mr. Olmsted, but to the Superintendent of Planting at that time, whose operations Mr. Olmsted could not control, as is fully set forth in the written complaints of the Olmsteds to the Commissioners.

We have eight large parks, comprising 1,300 acres; they have cost, exclusive of the playgrounds, thirteen million dollars; and the only mistakes that intelligent critics can find in the work of the designer of these parks are a few unnecessary walls, walks and steps. Of what other man who has been entrusted with the expenditure of so much money could it be said, after his work was done, that he made only three or four relatively insignificant mistakes? We may agree that they were mistakes; but even those of us who criticized them at the time, and whose advice was overruled, realize, now



as then, that Frederick Law Olmsted was the greatest landscape engineer this country has produced, and that the Boston Park System was, on the whole, his greatest work. No other man ever had as much park construction entrusted to his care. He had opportunity in plenty; but he had the genius to utilize it; and opportunity and genius together make up greatness. We citizens of Boston and the generations that are to follow us owe him everlasting gratitude for the work he did in the Boston parks.

I will say nothing more of Mr. Olmsted, except to quote from Professor Sargent's dedication of the fifth volume of his "Silva of North America," where he is described as the "great artist whose love for nature has been a priceless benefit to his fellow countrymen."

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Mr. Chairman, all this criticism of Mr. Olmsted is a fraud; all the criticism that has been based upon the things I have mentioned is fictitious. It is not a genuine criticism from the standpoint of those who advance it. What do these critics care about a few mistakes, a few superfluous walls and a few unnecessary walks? That is not what they are concerned with. The real grievance that animates their criticism of the Park Commissioners - the grievance which lies behind their effort to make you believe that there has been some antagonism between Mr. Olmsted and Mr. Sargent, and that the work of the one is being undone by the other; - their real grievance, Mr. Chairman, is based on the construction of border plantations in front of their individual estates, and on the removal of particular trees, or groups of trees, which formed a pleasing prospect from their private houses. Their complaint does not affect the present Commissioners, or Mr. Sargent, or Mr. Pettigrew, in particular. It does not in reality affect their predecessors in office. It touches rather the whole theory of park management, and every manager of every park in the civilized world to-day. These critics come to you, assigning fictitious reasons for their opposition to the Park Commissioners, but in reality desiring that the parks of Boston shall be built and administered upon theories that are repugnant to the views not only of Mr. Olmsted and Mr. Sargent, not only to the published explanations of the eighteen successive Boston Park Commissioners, but to the opinions of all Park Commissioners, all Park Superintendents, and all authorities upon landscape art and tree culture in this country or elsewhere, the world all over.

Who are these objectors, and what are their real motives, as disclosed by their own evidence in this case? Three of them are abutters on Franklin Park - Messrs. Dole, Williams and Bolles. There are also two or three sympathizing neighbors. Then there are the men I have mentioned already - Messrs. Jeffery and MacCallum, suspended foremen and amateur detectives. And there is our old friend Dr. Barnes, who I might term a professional critic of municipal affairs, always finding fault with somebody, always criticising some department. It happens to be the Park Department this year; it may be the

Street Department next year. No administration can get along without him. No department, however admirably managed, is safe from his constant interference.\*

Why do these people object to boundary plantations? Because they live upon the edges of the parks, and because they think that the City of Boston is bound to administer the parks for their private personal interest, and not for the good of the people at large. They don't want boundary plantations behind whose screen the women and children who seek our parks in search of rest, quiet and happiness, can imagine themselves, for at least a few short hours in a weary day, removed from the toil of city life. They want those boundary plantations cut down, so that they as abutters may enjoy, even if it be to the detriment of everyone who visits the parks, the beautiful views across them. This is a purely selfish motive; but nothing new or unusual. You will find it exhibited everywhere near public parks. I am told that in New York, rich men living on Fifth avenue have had sufficient political influence to induce the Park Commissioners to cut down trees in front of their respective million dollar mansions.

So as to the boundary walls. No abutter, none at least who has appeared against the Commissioners at these hearings, believes in boundary walls - in front of his estate. And of course he would be pleased to have an entrance immediately opposite his house. The general need of boundary walls to preserve the plantations while they are young and to assist in the proper policing of the parks is not appreciated by these gentlemen; for they care no more for the general good than they do for the "views of the masses," which Mr. Bolles so contemptuously ignores.

The question of boundary walls and plantations will be found discussed in the Report for 1882, p. 20; Report for 1897-8, pp.4 and 9, Report for 1899-1900, p. 2, in the Notes on Franklin Park, p. 64, and elsewhere in the official publications of the Park Commissioners. See also the letter from Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot to Mr. Pettigrew, Exhibit 135. You will also remember that these walls were specifically noted in revised estimates of December 30, 1897.

The objections to the border plantations are founded, or professed to be founded, upon the assumption that the screens are desired in a spirit of aristocratic exclusiveness, so that people cannot look into the parks. Of course, as you all know by this time after the explanation of the witnesses, the real purpose of these border plantations is just the opposite. They are built here, as in all other rural parks in this country and elsewhere, so that when the people - who have built and paid for the parks and own them - go into them they shall be spared the annoyance of constantly observing artificial, uninteresting, and unsightly objects, and may feel as nearly as may be that they are really in the country. As Mr. Olmsted puts it in the Report for 1883, p. 20: "The circumstance that distinguishes a part therefore is that of seclusion. All parks properly so called are surrounded by screening plantations, and it is the leading motive in their design to shut out the view to

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\*Later on in his remarks, Matthews calls Barnes a "Professional Municipal Critic."

those to be benefited by them whatever might be unfavorable to a continuous impression of consistent sylvan scenery." The sense of seclusion from city sights, which is the desire and right of those who visit Franklin Park cannot, of course, be realized if the houses and other buildings of the abutters on the park are visible from within.

So, according to these critics, no tree should be removed - no matter how necessary in the execution of the general plan of the park and no matter if it be diseased or a source of danger to other trees - if it forms for the time being an object of familiar interest to the few individuals who happen to live in sight of it.

The trouble with Messrs. Dole, Williams and Bolles and their sympathizing friends is that they want the Park Commissioners to administer the funds and property entrusted to their care for the particular use and benefit of Dole, Williams and Bolles, rather than for the comfort, health and pleasure of the people who have bought and own the parks. Their whole theory could not be better expressed than by Mr. Dole when he said that he regarded Franklin Park as his "back yard."

Should the Park Commissioners be criticised for protecting the interests of the people, for whose benefit and at whose expense these great parks have been constructed? Are they not rather to be praised for making a correct stand in the public interest and for not yielding to the selfish demands of a few abutters? Our parks were bought and paid for by the people, and they must be laid out, planned, and administered for the benefit of the people as a whole. They are intended for the use of those who go to them in search of rest and recreation, and not for the benefit of those who live on the outside and merely wish to look in. This conception of the function of a public park is democratic, not aristocratic, and is now everywhere regarded as a fundamental principle of public park architecture.

The selfishness of the abutters seems to be accompanied by a mistaken idea that they have some legal rights in the premises. This is not so. The parks of Boston belong to the people as a whole; and the abutters have, as such, no special rights or privileges in them. They have paid nothing by way of betterment or otherwise for rights of view or for special entrances; and the claim that they are entitled to special privileges by reason of the situation of their estates upon the edges of the parks has simply no foundation in law.

I ought not, however, to pass from the case of these abutters without disclaiming any assumption that the three gentlemen and their friends who have appeared before this committee fairly represent the wishes of our park abutters as a whole. If you examine the city atlas you will see that there are about sixty abutters on the Back Bay Fens, about seventy on Franklin Park and twenty or thirty on Jamaica Park; but of all this number only three, Messrs. Dole, Williams and Bolles, have seen fit to come to these hearings to

criticise the Commissioners for the construction of border walls and plantations. I should be doing an injustice to those who live along our parks if I left you to suppose that these three selfish men were fairly representative of our park abutters as a class.

Another misconception of the true purposes of a park is disclosed by the thought which underlies the whole testimony of Mr. Dole and Mr. Enneking, that the parks are for the benefit of "those who are living at the present time." From the temporary standpoint of the present time it might, indeed, be desirable to leave the woods exactly as they are; because the effect of any cutting, however, slight, is to create conditions which for a short time are less beautiful than those which previously existed. But this view loses sight entirely of the fact that our public parks are not only for the benefit of those now living in the city, but also for the use and enjoyment of those who are to come after us. In fact, the next generation has just as large a proprietary interest in the parks as we have, for those who succeed us will for the next thirty years be called upon to contribute to the original cost of the work now being carried on. It is, therefore, plainly the duty of the Commissioners to so manage the parks and the woods in them that they will be attractive and useful to succeeding generations as well as to our own. As stated by Mr. Olmsted in a public address printed with the Annual Report for 1888, "The results of any proper work of a Park Department are not apt to be fully reached for a long time after the work has been mainly done. Often the early results are decidedly unpleasing. . . . The best intended results may not ripen during the lifetime of those to be chiefly credited with them." The park lands were conveyed to us to have and to hold in perpetuity, and were acquired as much for the benefit of the unborn generations of the future as for the enjoyment of those who happen to be living on the day of purchase. The duty of our Park Commissioners is clearly not to yield to the selfish impatience of those who wish to keep the parks exactly as they are for fear of losing temporarily a portion of their beauty; but to do that which is in the long run best for the parks and the trees in them, so that the people who are to come after us, and who will be infinitely more numerous than we are, may enjoy the finest park scenery obtainable.

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Our seven critics entertain, or profess to entertain, certain other beliefs concerning the methods and purposes of the Park Commissioners, which are perhaps unimportant in themselves, but which I will allude to in passing as indicating the facility with which ignorance can harden into obstinate and unreasoning criticism.

In the first place some of these gentlemen think that the only object of the Commissioners and their advisers is to grow "specimen" trees, - such for instance as are to be seen in the Arnold Arboretum. It seems hardly necessary to refute this notion; as all that the critics had to do to discover how



mistaken they were was to take a walk through the Arboretum where they would see how "specimen" trees are really grown. There is no evidence of such a policy anywhere in the parks; and no "specimen" tree of the sort in question has been or could be pointed out, except possible a few which may have been growing in the open for many years. The Commissioners planting consists almost entirely of border trees along the roads and of continuous plantations or banks of trees.

Two or three of the witnesses thought that they could score a point against the Commissioners by suggesting that they were trying to imitate English park effects. Now the only distinctly English park effect that any of our eighteen Commissioners have tried to introduce is the one which the Commissioners under investigation in this case have deliberately abandoned, namely, the establishment of a Rotten Row in Franklin Park. On cross-examination, however, it appeared that what these witnesses had in mind by "English" park scenery was an effect of open lawns with large isolated trees scattered about. There are one or two places in Franklin Park where scenery of this sort is to be found, namely, the glade called Ellicott Dale and the Playstead; but I think that everybody will admit that these are about the most beautiful parts of Franklin Park. None of the critics have suggested that these sections of the park be altered so as to avoid any appearance of English scenery. The only basis for criticism of this sort is the unconcealed desire to have the committee and the public think that the Commissioners are doing something "English." It is founded upon a total misapprehension of what good park scenery consists of and also upon false assumptions as to the facts of the case. The whole aim of our successive Park Commissioners, their landscape architects and advisers from the beginning has been, as repeatedly explained in the annual reports of the department, and particularly in Mr. Olmsted's "Notes on Franklin Park," to create such conditions as will permit the gradual recovering of the soil with genuine and typical New England woodland scenes. English park effects such as these critics have in mind are very beautiful in themselves, but as a matter of fact they have not been sought by our Commissioners, whose constant aim has been quite otherwise, as any of the critics might have ascertained for himself if he had taken the trouble to inspect the annual reports of the department. I hope to find time to quote from some of these reports before I close my arguments.

It was said that the Commissioners are cutting out the older trees for the purpose of encouraging younger ones. This also is a misapprehension. If you will look through the woods in Franklin Park you will be struck with the fact that it is rather the younger trees than the older ones which seem to have been cut out - although it is difficult to find many traces of cutting any way. The older trees, if equally healthy have been preferred, as is common in the care of woods.

Similarly they say that the Commissioners are trying to get rid of the undergrowth is, or how its presence is secured. When the Commissioners are engaged in efforts to secure a natural undergrowth and in order to do so cut out some trees to let the light in and take out some of the existing underwood,



which is not natural there, the witnesses rush to the conclusion that it is the purpose of the Commissioners to sweep the undergrowth entirely out and to leave the floor of the woods as smooth as a billiard table.

All these minor assumptions are false, as any of these witnesses might have discovered, if he had taken the pains to consult anybody connected with the Park Department.

But the objections of the critics are mainly based upon the belief, or alleged belief, that the Park Commissioners have altered the natural scenery and destroyed the natural beauty of the landscape as it existed before the creation of the parks.

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This criticism, Mr. Chairman, is founded in the first place upon a total misunderstanding of what a state of nature in New England really was. Some of the witnesses seem actually to believe that Franklin Park, or the lands which have since become Franklin Park, were, in 1883 in a "state of nature," and formed a "characteristic New England landscape." These were Mr. Enneking's own words; and he added that Franklin Park before it was bought for park purposes was an "Eden of beauty." Mr. Dole is a little better informed as to what a New England landscape really was, and only claims that Franklin Park was in a state of "semi-nature."

Now, Mr. Chairman, this whole notion is erroneous; there is not a glimmer of fact contained in it. It is totally and completely wrong. There was nothing on the lands bought by the city for Franklin Park in 1883 that was in a "state of nature." There was hardly a square foot of soil, there certainly was not an acre out of the whole five hundred and fifty that, in its appearance, even approximated a state of nature. But a third or a quarter of the territory was wooded; and that was not covered by natural woods, but only with such trees as had casually sprung up after the use of the axe for two centuries and the progress of repeated fires. The soil had become impoverished; great changes had occurred in the species of trees; and those that were found growing there were for the most part starved, stunted and decayed. There was, in fact, hardly a tree similar in kind, vigor or appearance to those which beautified the place when our ancestors founded this country, and when a state of nature really prevailed. The face of the land was scarred with innumerable roads, stone walls, quarries, buildings, stables and other artificial and unnatural objects. It was dotted here and there with foreign apple trees, Norway spruces, and other trees which, though native to New England, were not native in that spot.

So far from it being true that the lands which became Franklin Park in 1883 were then in a state of nature, it would be more correct to say that there was not a thing there which resembled the natural scenes which our ancestors saw when they landed on these shores in 1630. Everybody knows that except these critics. Everybody else knows, or at least can find out, what the natural condition of the New England landscape was. You can see it

today in northern Main, New Hampshire and New York. Many of you doubtless have seen it. One instance of it you can still discover, in all probability, in Boston - and that is in the hemlock woods in the Arboretum. Although these woods may no, perhpas, so far as the individual trees go, reach back to 1630, yet in the mass they fairly represent a native New England hemlock grove. A state of nature in New England meant simply one unbroken forest. There was not a meadow, there was not a glade, there was not a natural open space upon the surface of the land, when our ancestors cleared the woods. From the Atlantic ocean westward to far beyond New York there was nothing but a dense, unbroken forest.

People who talk about a "state of nature" as existing in Franklin Park seventeen years ago simply do not know the meaning of these words in their application to New England scenery.

If you want to know what the condition of Franklin Park really was in 1883 and what changes have been effected in its appearance in the intervening seventeen years you can get a very good idea by comparing the two maps that have been put in evidence as Exhibits 137 and 138. They show you Franklin Park as it was and as it is. If you want photographic proof you will find it in the annual reports of the Department and in the collection of photographs at the Commissioners' office. If you want written proof you will find it in Exhibit 130 and elsewhere in Mr. Olmsted's descriptions of Franklin Park. I would refer you particularly to the valuable pamphlet written by him and published by the Department in 1886, entitled "Notes on Franklin Park"; and I would ask you to note particularly what Mr. Olmsted says on page 40 to the effect that the lands comprising Franklin Park "had been at various points harshly gashed by rudely enginnered roads, scarred by quarries and gravel pits and disruralized by artificially disposed trees and pseudo-rustic structures."

Exhibit 130, which is a special report by Mr. Olmsted to the Park Commissioners, dated August 13, 1893, upon the condition of the trees in the public parks, contains the statement that most of them "had sprung up naturally in situations which, because of the thinness and poverty of the gravelly soil, and because of the ledges penetrating it and the boulders scattered through it, had been left uncultivated. They were generally sprouts from stumps of trees previously felled and had been crowded into spindling and awkward forms. The straightest and best had been culled out, leaving the poorer. All the wooded ground had repeatedly been burned over, destroying the leaf-mould upon it, and injuring the trees. There was but little underwood. The conditions described had been unfavorably to the health and vigor of the trees remaining, and most of them, when they came into possiession of the city, were of a quality which would be considered extremely poor if found in the trees of a garden or lawn, or on any fair cultivable land. Among them all there was hardly a score of fine, symmetrical, well-grown, healthy specimens. A great majority of all were of a distinctly stunted habit. Trees of corresponding age, growing under more favorable conditions, in more genial regions, are often found or more than twice their average size. Many showed evidence of decrepttude and vital failure. Some were dying. Considerable parts of many were in a state of progressive decay, this being manifest by numerous dead limbs and the thinness of their foliage.....

The notion that the scenery has been made less natural or more artificial is equally unfounded.....

As to what has been done in Franklin Park it may be said in a general way that most of the buildings have been removed, and that all the walls, roads, banks, hedges and other artificial features have been done away with. The lines of trees planted along these roads have also been destroyed, together with many isolated apple and other foreign trees. Various glades and views have been opened up; a pond has been constructed, the absence of water having, in Mr. Olmsted's opinion, been one of the drawbacks to the park; and the wooded area has been more than doubled. The result, due not, as Mr. Enneking supposed, to the appearance of the place in 1883, but rather to the changes made by Mr. Olmsted and his successors, has been to make of Franklin Park something which Mr. Enneking admits to be in many respects more beautiful than any park in Europe. Mr. Olmsted anticipated this very attack when he said in 1888 that "The best results of the best, most difficult, and most costly operations are likely to be accepted by the public as results of nature's work almost exclusively."

What I have said about Franklin Park applies as well to Jamaica Pond. This pond was doubtless, when really in a state of nature, a most beautiful spot, as it is to-day, and perhaps more beautiful then than now; but it was not a beautiful place in 1892 when we took it, in comparison with either its former or its present state. It was surrounded with buildings, everyone of them objectionable as adjuncts to a public park. It had, in particular, two great wooden structures used as ice houses on its banks. It had high wooden fences. It had these and other artificial surroundings, all of which have been removed by the Commissioners in the effort to do at Jamaica Pond what they have done at Franklin Park - i.e., to restore the surface of the land approximately to a state of nature, or, rather, to state the case more accurately, I think, to put it in such a condition that Nature herself will, in the course of time, be enabled to reproduce itself and to restore original conditions and original scenery.

The general theory of park construction has been fully explained by Mr. Olmsted and our various Park Commissioners. You will find that in the annual reports of the department the whole theory of public park construction and management, and the reasons for re-establishing, or recreating a state of nature, or as close an approximation to it as it possible, instead of introducing artificial scenery and artificial features, are far more elaborately explained than I have time for on the present occasion. These reports are accessible to everybody, and all the critics had to do, if they were honest in their criticism and really desired to inform themselves as to the purposes of the changes effected since 1883, was to consult the annual reports of the Park Department.

They might, for instance, have gone to the Second Report of the Park Commissioners, dated April 24, 1876, - before Mr. Olmsted was retained, - and have read a comprehensive description of the proposed parks. On page 9

of this report they would have found that in the opinion of our first Board of Park Commissioners, Messrs. Coolidge, Gray and Dalton - to whom too much credit cannot be given for conceiving and laying out our park system - the "sylvan features of the parks should be rigidly protected and all costly artificial ornamentation excluded." I will quote also the sentences which follow these words; "Simplicity of treatment, only, can harmonize with the natural beauties of the grounds, while any unnecessary architectural or engineering display will be both a waste and disfigurement. Many of the noblest parks in England have, for centuries, been treated in this manner. As a general rule, each element in their scenery is simple, natural to the soil and climate and unobtrusive, and yet the passing observer is very strongly impressed with the manner with which the views are successively opened before him, through the innumerable combinations into which the individually modest elements constantly rearrange themselves; views which often possess every quality of complete and expressive landscape composition." Further along on p. 31 the Commissioners, speaking of what is now Franklin Park, say: "This reservation is worthy the highest skill of the landscape gardener and engineer, under whose treatment it would become a park in the true sense of the word, and adequate to the enjoyment of the people of Boston for many years. Thousands can occupy its groves, hillsides and glades with mutual pleasure, and find thereby that refreshment and relief from city sights and sounds which rural surroundings can only give."

These quotations are from the first detailed description of what our parks, particularly the one contemplated in West Roxbury, were going to be. After the employment of Mr. Olmsted as advisory architect and the taking of the lands for Franklin Park, he was requested by the then Board of Park Commissioners, Messrs. Dean, Maguire and Andrew, to prepare a statement for publication explanatory of his plans for the development of that park. The result was one of the most valuable contributions to the literature of public parks that has ever been written. I have already referred to it once or twice. Its full title is "Notes on the Plan of Franklin Park and Related Matters," and it was published by the Park Commissioners of 1886 as an official description of what it was proposed to do with the lands acquired in 1883 for a country park. I wish that I had time to quote from it extensively, but I must restrict my use of it to such portions as describe more particularly the general purpose of the landscape architect with reference to natural scenery and the avoidance of artificial features. On page 45 he defines the purpose of the plan of Franklin Park to be that "of placing within easy reach of the people of the city the enjoyment of such a measure as is practicable of rural scenery." He goes on to say that it is not an easy matter in the immediate outskirts of a great city to provide scenery which shall be so far rural in character and effect as to be capable of exerting the influences sought for. He refers to the fact that "some wise men are accustomed to ridicule the earlier result of efforts to that end by comparing it with scenery remote from cities, the rurality of which owes nothing to human care," and points out that as such scenery is not available for the masses of the people of a great city the only question is how much of it can be procured at reasonable cost within the limits of a city park.



On page 61 - and I call the attention of our friends, the anti-tree cutters, to these words - he says; "The woods of the Wilderness, after having been much thinned and trimmed with a view to the growth of the best of them in sturdier and more umbrageous forms, and to some degree of grouping and more harmonious companionship, are also to be interspersed with scattered, irregular thickets of low, sturdy bushes, not only for picturesqueness, but to keep the ground in the more arid parts, better shaded and moister, hide its barrenness, check rushing movements of visitors and prevent the trampling of the drier ground to dust."

Note also the following extracts from pages 62 and 63; "From wherever these larger prospects open, the middle distances will be quiet, slightly hollowed surfaces of turf or baskets, bracken, sweet-fern, or mosses, the back-grounds formed by woodsides of a soft, even, subdued tone, with long graceful, undulating sky lines, which, according to the point of view of the observer on the park, will be from one to five miles away. Causeways, trees, rocks and knolls interrupting or disturbing the unity, breadth, quiet and harmony of these broader open passages of the park scenery are to come away. There are none of importance that are not of artificial origin and easily removable. Trees wanting to the results proposed are to be planted and suitably developed by timely thinning."

Upon the important question of the cost of maintenance, Mr. Olmsted's views are found summarized on pages 84 and 85 of this pamphlet. "Rural parks may be excessively costly of maintenance, either by setting the standard so low that visitors gain but little rural refreshment from them, or by setting it so high that it cannot be lived up to, and then becomes forlorn through shabby gentility. . . . The annual running expenses of a park of the extent of Franklin Park, if laid out, stocked and maintained in the manner of the Public Garden of Boston, or of any much decorated, garden-like ground, would be about \$500,000 . . . . The plan adopted by the Commissioners for Franklin Park is one that, when the designed plantings have been well established, will require comparatively little fine garden work, no exotic or fine decorative gardening, no glass, no structures of an unsubstantial class, and few of any kind subject to fall into serious disrepair, except roads and walks."

On pp. 95 to 98 he says, "The value of a large park does not lie, as is apt to be thoughtlessly taken for granted, in those elements which cost and manifest the most labor and the largest absorption of taxes; that is to say, in the roads, walks, bridge, buildings, and other obviously constructed features. These have value as conveniences for making the larger elements of a park available for the enjoyment of the public. . . . Mainly, the value of a park depends on the disposition and the quality of its woods, and the relation of its woods to other natural features: ledges, boulders, declivities, swells, dimples, and to qualities of surface, as verdure and tuftiness. Under good management these things do not, like roads and walks, wear out or in any way lose value with age. Individual trees must from time to time be removed to avoid crowding, or because of decay; but, as a rule, the older the wood, and the less of newness and rawness there is to be seen in all the elements of



a park, the better it serves its purpose. This rule holds for centuries - without limit. . . .As to a park, when the principal outlay has been made, the result may, and under good management must, for many years afterwards, be increasing in value at a constantly advancing rate of increase, and never cease to increase as long as the city endures. This (with an explanation presently to be made in a footnote), will be obviously true as to the principal element of a park, its plantation. . . .The better to bring this class of considerations home, it may be suggested that had five hundred acres of land been set apart as a park for Boston, and trees planted, natural plantations thinned, opened, preserved, renewed, and other natural features protected and judiciously treated for two centuries past, instead of deteriorating as most other public works would have done, the park would have been all the time advancing with a constantly accelerating rate of advance in value. But had the artificial features been originally made in adaptation, solely to the wants of the people of the day or their immediate successors, an enlargement and re-adjustment of them suitably to a convenient use of the park by the present population of Boston could only be effected by much destruction of the natural features. . . .In no other public work of a city, then, is it of as much importance as in a park to determine courses to be pursued with regard to growing results, and in a great degree distant ends rather than ends close at hand and soon to be fully realizable."

In the foot-note referred to in this last quotation Mr. Olmsted adds that "the value of everything else to be contemplated in the plan of a park must be forever dependent on the condition of its trees."

Finally on page 108 he lays down the doctrine that the only permanent security for the efficient sustenance of the larger purposes to be served by a public park lies in a strong conviction of its importance pervading the community. "Such a conviction cannot be expected to develop intuitively or spontaneously, at an early period of a large park undertaking, because the work will as yet be supplying little of immediate and direct pleasing interest to the public. On the contrary, the earlier work on a park site is apt to destroy for the time being, much of whatever rural beauty it may possess."

His closing words are: "Even a new plantation, if well designed for future beauty, is apt at first to make an unpleasant impression. . . .In the management of a large park it is then of the first importance that the people to whom its managers are responsible should be asked and aided to acquaint themselves, otherwise than by observation on the ground, with the general plan upon which it is to be formed, to understand the leading ends and motives of this plan, the dependence of one part upon another, the subordination of the minor to the major motives, and to take an intelligent and liberal interest, and a well grounded satisfaction, in its development through growth, as well as through the advance of constructive operations."

This pamphlet ends with an apt quotation from Ruskin:

"Let it not be for present delight nor for present use alone; let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for and let us think. . . .that a time is to come when. . . .men will say: 'See, this our fathers did for us.'"

In his report to the Commissioners of 1887, printed in the annual report for that year, he calls attention on pages 70 and 71 to the necessity for extensive tree cutting in Franklin Park, not only for the purpose of clearing the way for the necessary roads, but also for reasons of a purely landscape order. "Necessarily many trees must," he says, "be taken out to make way for the roads and walks, and more that slopes of natural character may be formed where the existing natural surface has to be broken. Not infrequently also insignificant or decaying and unpromising trees are to be removed that others may be better developed and that natural features of various kinds may be better brought into view."

In the report for 1889, on page 44, Mr. Olmsted again adverts to the general aim to be kept in view in the treatment of Franklin Park, as follows: "The principal aim of the work undertaken by the Commissioners to make its characteristics in these respects [referring to hills, dales, ledges, woods and meadows] more marked and effective by the introduction of judiciously directed roads, walks and other conveniences to lead people in courses by which they will obtain the most enjoyment of the scenery for themselves and interfere least with the enjoyment of it by others. The means taken for this purpose cannot have their intended effect all at once. The first results are necessarily raw and inharmonious. Some little time is needed to reconcile them with nature. . . ." "Grace and breadth of turfy surface is gained through the removal of old causeways, ridges and walls, the reduction of hillocks, and the partial filling of abrupt depressions; through the cutting out of trees by which broad views were too much obstructed or divided, through the planting of trees and bushes where shade and obscurity would enhance landscape effects, and by giving greater apparent prominence to certain rocks and trees and other natural objects of interest."

I will end these quotations from Mr. Olmsted with a fine passage from his report to the department in 1894 - the last he ever wrote, I believe published in the annual report for 1894-95 at page 70. As near as I can ascertain this is the last word that Frederick Law Olmsted left as sort of a legacy to the city and the people for whom he had done so much:

"The Boston Parks, after nearly twenty years of effort, have only lately reached that stage of development which enables the general public to begin to understand what parks really are and what the designing of them means. Crowded populations need space for exercise, for air, and for obtaining the refreshing sense of openness and the sight of sky, distance and landscape, of which they are so completely deprived in the streets. The Adirondacks, the White Mountains, and the Maine woods supply for many persons who can afford to travel to them the needed antidote to city life. The nearer, more thoroughly humanized and yet unsophisticated landscape of the rural township affords annual refreshment of thousands of others. For the recreation of those who must remain in town, why is it not possible to purchase an attractive and acceptable rural area comprising woods, fields, streams and ponds, and preserve it forever in that charming condition which is the product of the natural partnership of man and nature? No gravel paths are half so charming as the turfed wood roads of New England farms, no shrubbery so pleasing as those which nature rears along the farmers' walls, no pools so lovely as those which, fringed with natural growth, fill and drain away according to the season and the supply of the rain.

...In Franklin Park there is found a leafy screen which hides the town, a breadth of view, an openness, a peculiar kind of scenery, which, in spite of necessarily broad roads and gravel walks, is very refreshing, interesting, and beautiful in a high degree. Such park scenery bears little resemblance to either the ideal landscape of painters or the so-called natural landscape, of farms, orchards, and wood-lots. No designer of parks has ever pretended to imitate either of these kinds of landscape, and no sensible person will criticise a park for the absence or presence of either. It is the calling and duty of the conscientious landscape architect to devise ways of arranging land and its accompanying landscape so that whatever the particular purpose in view may be, the result shall be as thoroughly convenient and at the same time as thoroughly beautiful as possible. This is the problem which presents itself in countless form - in the smallest suburban lot and the finest country-seat, the new seaside pleasure resort and the new factory town, the public school-boys' playground and the ornate city square. The country park of a great city presents this universal problem in one of its most difficult phases. Such a park is a tract of land dedicated to a particular purpose, namely, the refreshment of the bodies and souls of great numbers of people. In arranging land and landscape with this purpose in view, it is undoubtedly desirable to follow as far as possible the dictates of poetic and aesthetic feeling for breadth of composition and picturesqueness of detail. On the other hand, it is a law of nature which must not be forgotten, that satisfying beauty springs from fitness or adaptation to purpose much more surely and directly than from added ornament or the most careful imitation. At all events, it is in this faith that the undersigned have worked for years upon the plans and designs of the Boston parks, with what measure of success only time can determine.

Respectfully submitted,  
Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot"

In the documents I have referred to the fullest information is contained, not only regarding what was done and what was intended to be done in the Boston parks, but concerning the general theory of public parks, their construction maintenance and management. In fact, the twenty-five annual reports of the Park Department of the City of Boston, together with the "Notes on Franklin Park," constitute an epitome of the art of landscape gardening as applied to public plantations in this country...  

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